DIGITAL JUSTICE

A STUDY AND ACTION GUIDE

WACC
Europe
communication for all

World Council
of Churches

DIGITAL JUSTICE
A STUDY AND ACTION GUIDE

The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) is an international non-governmental organization that promotes communication as a basic human right, essential to people's dignity and community. Rooted in Christian faith, WACC works with all those denied the right to communicate because of status, identity, or gender. It advocates full access to information and communication, and promotes open and diverse media. WACC strengthens networks of communicators to advance peace, understanding and justice.

WCC Publications is the book publishing programme of the World Council of Churches. The WCC is a worldwide fellowship of 352 member churches which represents more than half a billion Christians around the world. The WCC calls its member churches to seek unity, a common public witness and service to others in a world where hope and solidarity are the seeds for justice and peace. The WCC works with people of all faiths seeking reconciliation with the goal of justice, peace, and a more equitable world.

To respond to challenges and opportunities of the digital age, we need an inclusive and holistic participatory approach that is both international and intergenerational, based on the sacred value of social justice.

Communication for Social Justice
in a Digital Age, Symposium Manifesto, September 2021

As we wrestle with these continuing and new opportunities and challenges, two intrinsically connected aspects must play a central role in our vision and theological reflection on digital justice: relationality and vulnerability.

A New Communications Paper for the 21st Century:
A Vision of Digital Justice (World Council of Churches)

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PREFACE

Are you worried about fake news and social media causing real-world problems? Are you concerned about online hate speech and trolling? Are you committed to ecological and social justice, but are not sure how this relates to anything digital? Do you, or does anyone you know use digital technologies to build community, work, and advocate for justice? If you said yes to any of these questions, then you are in the right place.

This guide is a small slice of a much bigger vision for digital justice. It offers insights and ideas for bringing about ecological and social justice, human rights, and democracy wherever digital communication touches our lives. While digital technologies are found nearly everywhere in almost everything, our core concern here is with relational tools and platforms that connect people and help us communicate.

> *We will create a grassroots, faith-inspired resistance to the forces challenging human dignity and flourishing in digital spaces.*
>
> —*Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age*

The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) have taken big steps in bringing this vision to life. In September 2021, along with ecumenical partners Brot für die Welt (Bread for the World), Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (Evangelical Church in Germany), Evangelische Mission Weltweit (EMW, Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany), and the World Student Christian Federation, they brought together researchers, educators, activists, and faith and civil society leaders in a hybrid symposium, "Communication for Justice in a Social Age." People from all over the world shared with each other how digital transformation has impacted their communities and their needs and hopes for the future. Participants listened and spoke, discerned and questioned, and together wrote a manifesto charting our course forward.

The manifesto that resulted, entitled *Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age*, is a declaration of our hopes and ambitions. It names the biggest challenges we see from a diversity of contexts and cultures. It offers guidance and encourages all of us, everywhere to take up digital justice.

In preparation for the gathering of the WCC's 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe in 2022, the WCC Central Committee received a *New Communications Paper for the 21st Century: A Vision of Digital Justice* and forwarded it to the assembly for study and reflection. The paper is based on the manifesto, and it names digital divides, accessibility, public space, inequity, education, gender justice, privacy and security, militarization, and artificial intelligence and cyberspace as key challenges for digital justice.

The pages that follow take you through the critical questions and issues emerging from these two texts. You can work through these chapters on your own, or better yet, get together with a few friends or with your faith community!
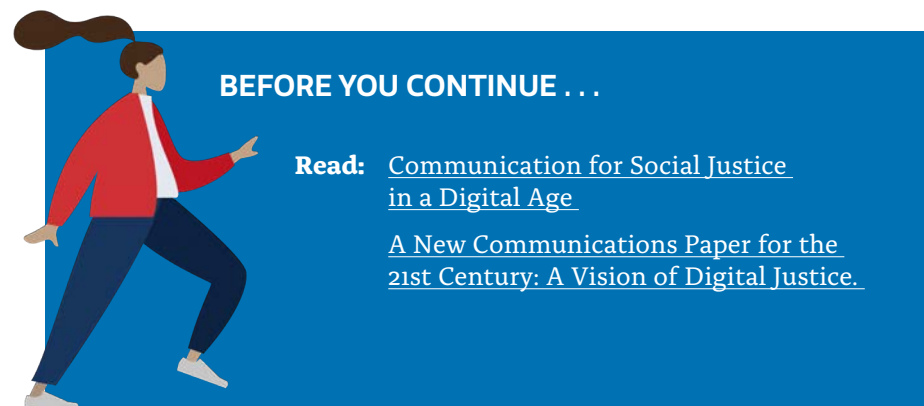
This guide is short and designed to spark curiosity. It highlights some, but certainly not all digital justice issues. At its heart is digital communication and its impacts on marginalized people and groups. The resources, case studies, facts, and questions are a launching pad for further learning and action. You can go through the whole book as written or take the chapters in any order that suits you.

We are called to a journey of justice and peace, to ensure that all may have life and live it abundantly (John 10:10). Digital communication presents challenges that may at first seem daunting. But through faith, education, and action, we can equip ourselves and our fellowship to proclaim hope and seek justice in a digital age. Join us!

> *Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times.*
>
> —*Psalm 106:3*

A selection of resources, including the suggested readings, websites, and videos that are listed in each chapter, is at the end of this guide. Other resources may be found on the WACC Global website. We encourage you to pause as you go through this text to consult these resources and find others from your own context relating to the digital justice challenges in this guide.

BEFORE YOU CONTINUE . . .

Read: Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age

A New Communications Paper for the 21st Century: A Vision of Digital Justice.

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INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL JUSTICE

WHY DIGITAL JUSTICE?

Digital technologies are transforming our world and the multiple spaces in which we live and move. These technologies offer us new ways to communicate, to inform ourselves and navigate the world, to advocate for human dignity and rights, and for multiple voices to be heard.

—*A New Communications Paper for the 21st Century: A Vision of Digital Justice*

The ecological and social impact of digital communication is far too important to leave to powerful people, companies, and governments. Social cohesion and the integrity of creation are at stake. Civil society, including people and communities of faith, have a critical role to play in creating just and equitable digital communication for all.

All humans are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14a), created for relationship with each other and the whole of creation. Our ability to share stories and wisdom, learn from each other, pass on language and culture, and speak out against injustice are all central to our humanity. Digital communication tools help bridge digital divides, allowing us to enter into relationship, stand in solidarity with each other, and express our values and identities in creative and powerful ways.

Digital communication can be a force for good, holding the promise of justice and equity for marginalized people around the world. The tools and platforms we use online can provide opportunities to learn, participate in society and politics, and earn a living. Digital spaces can be places of encounter, where we exercise our communication rights and create new public fora for learning, debate, and civic engagement. The spaces can effect real change and cultivate inclusive societies for people with disabilities or restrictions due to health, mobility, income, and more.

Digital communication can also help people understand and exercise their human and civil rights. Being connected to nearly the whole world helps us organize and mobilize for social and ecological justice. Ethnic and racial minorities, women, refugees and migrants, people with disabilities, and all those who are marginalized can build community and connect with others who share their experiences. The internet, social media, and the web have also created new pathways for building up just and democratic societies. These advances have empowered people to engage in citizen journalism and digital activism, providing a corrective to the power of governments and technology corporations.

These same digital technologies, however, can also be tools of oppression and exclusion. Digital divides create barriers to opportunity and access that further marginalize people who are already marginalized. Difficulty accessing digital spaces reinforces existing discrimination and creates new ways to exclude vulnerable people from education, work, and democratic processes. Digital platforms allow for cyberattacks, hacking, terrorism, and automated weapons. Online abuse, disinformation, and hate speech all have offline consequences—people experience threats and violence, democracy is disrupted, and vulnerable groups shy away from full participation in digital spaces. Mining for components, the manufacture of devices, planned obsolescence, and tech waste devastate ecosystems. Our digital footprints are tracked, and our personal data traded for profit and control. These are uniquely digital challenges requiring new thinking and action for the sake of justice.

> *In responding ecumenically to the contemporary challenges posed by digital transformation, the ecumenical fellowship can draw upon the resources and insights gained over the past seven decades in grappling with the challenges of communication.*
>
> —*A New Communications Paper for the 21st Century: A Vision of Digital Justice*

Digital communication amplifies existing injustices, mirroring online the inequity and oppression we find offline. It also creates new injustices—especially when people get left behind, as digital communication becomes more and more essential to life in the 21st century. The material that follows shows how urgent digital justice is for everyone everywhere. By learning, questioning, organizing, and acting we can work for digital justice and the flourishing of all.

SEEKING DIGITAL JUSTICE

> *Digital justice requires, at the same time, gender justice, climate justice, economic justice, racial justice, and so much more.*
>
> —*Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age*

Digital communication is all around us—so too is the need for digital justice! In this guide we look at digital tools, platforms, and issues that impact how we communicate and how our communication rights are exercised. These fall within five areas: global digital divides, accessing digital spaces, the weaponization of digital resources, marginalized groups, and surveillance.

While we cannot cover all topics and questions, our aim is to give you an inclusive and diverse resource that will inspire you to learn more and take action to build a transformational movement. Our method is intercultural, intergenerational, and global. It is dedicated to nurturing relationships across all kinds of differences and divides. With this in mind, here are five starting points to guide you as you work your way through this text.

1. HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS

> *To achieve digital justice, we need . . . government policies and actions that are informed and supported by civil society, founded on human dignity, human rights, and democratic principles.*
>
> —*Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age*

Human and civil rights provide a framework for digital justice. They can help us advocate for change and act in solidarity with marginalized groups. We can leverage existing laws to protect vulnerable people and communities. Digital communication can provide people with an opportunity to exercise these same rights and duties. Digital spaces are an extension of physical spaces, and online rights are an extension of offline ones.

2. COMMUNICATION RIGHTS

> *No matter the issue—violence against women, abuse of children, poverty, conflict resolution, self-determination, racism, migration, labour rights, Indigenous rights, health, land, climate—little can be done without effective communication.*
>
> —*Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age*

Communication, including digital communication, is a human right. The right to communicate and the right to be in communication make all justice possible. As the world becomes more and more reliant on digital devices and platforms, it is critical that we uphold communication rights in digital spaces. This includes protecting freedom of expression, maintaining equitable access to digital communication tools, providing for the open flow of information, and guaranteeing the safety, dignity, and privacy of all users.

3. INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION

> *Active participation in the digital space can contribute to full participation in all domains of life.*
>
> —*Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age*

While we have all been affected by the rise of digital communication, it touches us in different ways. An inclusive and participatory approach to digital justice honours the diversity of human needs and experiences. It brings everyone to the table but lifts up the perspectives and concerns of those who are marginalized. It cultivates dialogue that is accessible and fair, allowing everyone to participate according to their own culture, language, and means of communication.

4. CRITIQUING AND RESISTING POWER

We underlined the need for increased accountability and transparency for corporations that have the power and ability to influence and shape public and political discourse.

—*Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age*

Power over digital communication rests in the hands of a very few people and global corporations. This power serves profit and seeks to control people, leading to the exploitation of humanity and the earth. The consolidation of tech power has created a digital world filled with discrimination and extremism. Seeking digital justice requires understanding and critiquing the way this power influences all our digital communication. Grassroots and faith-inspired action helps to uphold human dignity, so that digital communication serves people, not power and profit.

5. BUILDING A TRANSFORMATIVE MOVEMENT

To achieve digital justice, we need a transformative movement of individuals, communities, educational institutions, media agencies, and civil society – including communities of faith.

—*Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age*

Seeking digital justice is our collective work. It requires a diversity of gifts and wisdom, drawing on social and ecological justice. Alongside civil society action, we need national and international laws for the flourishing of human rights and democracy through and with digital communication. Faith communities have a powerful opportunity to advocate for and help create digital tools and platforms that are safe, accessible, and equitable for all.

BEFORE YOU CONTINUE . . .

Read: Impacts of Digital Transformation on Communities and Societies
(Ellen Ueberschär, *Media Development*)

Our Digital Ecology
(Dean Dettloff, *Media Development*)

Watch: The 9 Principles to Promote Social Justice in the Digital Age

Do: Test your digital justice knowledge with our short quiz!

1

DIGITAL DIVIDES IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY

> **"**
> *The biblical preferential option for the poor and vulnerable directs our attention to information poverty and the digital divides in the global face of digitalization.*
> —*Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age*

Snapshot:
Digital divides are differences in access and opportunity created by digital technologies. These divides are compounded by social factors like class, gender, and race. Digital communication can create new divides or make existing ones bigger. It can also help overcome digital divides through open, affordable, and accessible technologies.

Key terms: digital divides, accessibility, affordability

WHAT ARE DIGITAL DIVIDES?

Simply put, digital divides are gaps between those with access to digital technology, devices, and skills, and those who are left without. It is a gap of privilege and power. Much of globalization relies on digitalization. Those who cannot fully access information technology are effectively sidelined from many aspects of society. Existing inequalities of wealth, opportunity, and education contribute to growing digital divides. Marginalized people and groups suffer disproportionality from digital divides. While digital communication is a powerful tool for social justice and cohesion, digital tools and platforms also contribute to the creation of new injustices. In this chapter, we will look at issues of accessibility and affordability, and other social factors that contribute to digital divides.

Nearly half of the **8** billion people on earth lack internet access and the ability to use digital technologies to their full potential.

FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS...

WHAT CAUSES DIGITAL DIVIDES?

Injustice and inequality create digital divides and digitally-caused divides. These emerge from systemic problems, such as racism, misogyny, and colonialism. Digital divides are broadened or bridged depending on the languages you speak, your level of education, where you were born, your age, gender, and more. Both technological and social factors influence how we learn about and use digital communication technologies. For example, speaking English and growing up in a home with digital devices are huge advantages in navigating all kinds of digital communication.

ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY

Availability and access are the starting points of using all digital communication technologies. Wealthy countries have led the way in setting rules for themselves in digital spaces, building digital infrastructures, and expanding access through digital literacy and other services. Still, many, even in those countries, are left on the other side of a digital divide due to barriers of language, class, education, and financial challenge. This reinforces existing divides and creates new ones as marginalized groups struggle for access to schooling, work, and services.

In countries on the other side of digital divides, people often face enormous challenges accessing digital communication devices and platforms. Natural disasters disrupt access or destroy infrastructure. Crises like civil unrest and war make access difficult or even impossible—often with little warning. Internet shutdowns are growing in frequency, with nearly 200 taking place across more than 30 countries in 2021 alone.

Women in South Asia are **70%** less likely to have a smartphone than men.

70 PER CENT

Just **10** languages account for more than **80 percent** of content on the web. There are more than **6000** languages in the world.

FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS...

Access also depends on the cost and availability of digital devices and services. Many people struggle to afford good home internet or must share devices with others. This makes it hard for many people to meet the demands of school and work, or even to maintain basic digital literacy.

SOCIAL FACTORS

Accessing and affording digital devices and services is only part of the digital divide story. Social and contextual factors significantly influence on which side of a digital divide we land. Digital communication devices, infrastructure, and platforms are controlled by a very few people and governments. Those who have control over digital spaces value profit over people, and exercise enormous influence over how, when, and why we communicate through digital means. For example, economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods typically have poorer internet access, making it difficult for students to keep up with online lessons, even if they have suitable devices.

Digital divides disproportionately affect women, Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities, racial and ethnic minorities, linguistic and ethnic minorities, the economically disadvantaged, people living in rural areas, refugees, and all those who experience social discrimination and exclusion. Offline patterns of marginalization are replicated—and often amplified—online.

BRIDGING DIGITAL DIVIDES

Identifying the technical and social aspects of digital divides is a critical first step in helping bridge them. It is essential that these factors are looked at in an intersectional way—that is, seeing how various experiences compound to create even bigger gaps in access to the digital world.

Everyone should have access to digital devices and technologies and the critical skills necessary to use them. This will empower people to participate more fully in decisions that affect their lives and their communities. Individually and collectively, we can take steps to build digital bridges. We can educate ourselves and help to educate others. We can take advocacy action through civil society and partner with organizations and groups who have direct experience in the variety of issues that contribute to digital divides. Importantly, we can draw on our existing work for social justice as a resource for the creation of free, democratic, and public digital spaces.

CASE STUDY

Digital illiteracy contributes to harmful digital divides. In the Gaza Strip, the community as a whole needs digital skills and training. People lack the ability to protect themselves online or access the full potential of digitalized societies for their work and education. They often shy away from digital spaces or are vulnerable to online exploitation and crime.

The Community Media Centre was established in Gaza City in 2007 to help bridge the gap between marginalized people and the media. The latter tend to be very focused on politicians and politics. The CMC advocates for more balanced media coverage of issues, shedding light on topics of importance for women and youth.

Through capacity-building and awareness workshops, the CMC helps all people in the Gaza Strip to navigate digital platforms effectively and securely. Key stakeholders include young women graduating from media programs, human rights activists, and social media influencers. More than 500 women have participated in this training. Regardless of their social and educational background, they are now equipped to go out and train others.

—*Based on a presentation by Andalib Adwa, director of the Community Media Centre in Gaza, at the September 2021 symposium on digital justice held by the World Council of Churches and World Association for Christian Communication.*

CONNECTING OUR FAITH

All humans are created for relationship and communication. This is central to our humanity and to what it means to be made in the image of God. When we bridge digital divides, we enter more fully into just and equitable relationships. Accessible and affordable digital communication for all is an expression of solidarity, a way to live out the biblical preferential option for the poor. We must place those who are digitally marginalized and disempowered at the heart of all our prayers, discernment, and theological reflections about digital divides in a global society.

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

—*Isaiah 58:6*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Communication builds connectedness. Where do you personally encounter digital divides? How can you work to bridge them?

- What digital divides do you think are most significant in your country? Check for studies from your government or universities and find out what social, political, and technological factors create and sustain these problems.

- What can we do to see that digital communication technologies developed in the future do not create new digital divides? Who should be included in the design and regulation of digital communication technologies from the very beginning?

- What role can churches play in bridging digital divides? How can civil society, including faith organizations, use digital communication to bring people closer together?

BEFORE YOU CONTINUE . . .

Read: Digital Media and Divide in Ethiopia
(Tedla Desta, *Media Development*)

Democratizing the Public Sphere
(Philip Lee, *Media Development*)

Watch: Sexism and the Digital Divide

Do: Identify three things you can do this week to bridge a digital divide.

2

ACCESSING DIGITAL SPACES

> **"**
> *[Public space] is the space where states and the public interact, where people, including the media, can express thoughts and feelings and participate democratically. Digitalization creates the opportunity for expanding this space, but the restriction of digital freedom can also cause this space to shrink.*
> —*Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age*

Snapshot: Digital spaces are online places where people can exercise their right to communication. They can also foster inclusion, especially for people with disabilities, restrictions due to health, and limited or restricted mobility. However, there are significant barriers to access, which create digital public spaces that are biased, unsafe, and exclusionary.

Key terms: barriers, access, communication rights, public space

WHAT ARE DIGITAL SPACES?

Digital spaces are places for communication, encounter, expression, and exchange of ideas, much like a public square in a town. Rights in digital spaces must be an extension of rights in other public spaces. Unfortunately, such online spaces are too often used for corporate profit and state surveillance. Communication rights in these spaces are thus restricted, causing our online public spaces to shrink rather than flourish. To ensure the health and growth of digital public spaces, we must protect democracy, fundamental rights, mutual accountability, and solidarity online.

Google commands nearly a third of global online advertising, with more than **80%** of its **$147** billion revenue coming from online ads in 2020.

147$
BILLION

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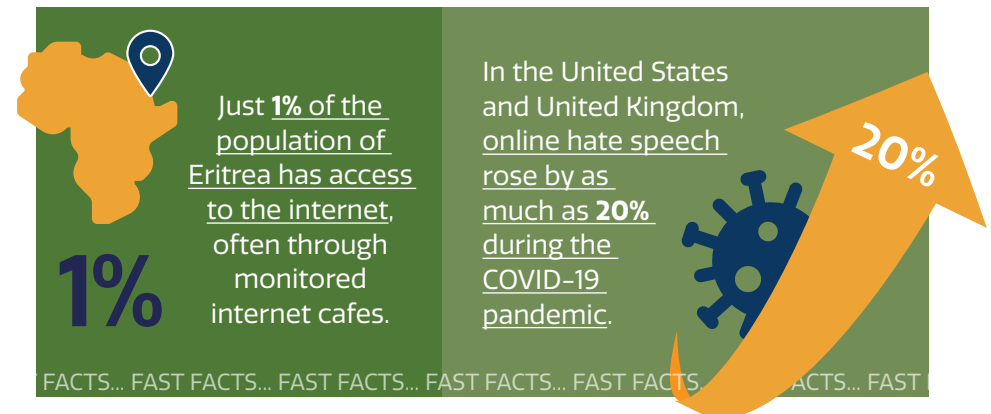
BARRIERS TO ACCESS

Digital public spaces are enhanced through the full participation of all people in our societies. Exclusion and marginalization diminish the quality of these spaces, leaving out valuable voices and experiences. This results in biased and unrepresentative discourse and encourages people to live in their own little silos.

There are many reasons why people have difficulty accessing and using digital communication spaces. The consolidation of tech power, overreach of governments, unethical conduct by corporations, and violation of human and civil rights all restrict opportunity. Surveillance limits online freedoms and increases digital vulnerability. Financial resources, level of education, and gender are also factors that significantly impact how we access and use digital communication technologies.

Concentrated ownership of mass media, including social media means that most digital spaces are controlled for profit.   A few, mostly American, technology companies are now more wealthy and powerful than most countries in the world. While the value of Meta (formerly Facebook) has fluctuated enormously as younger users move to other social media platforms its value in late 2022 of just under 500 billion dollars (US) is higher than the GDP of many countries. Meta and other tech giants operate with little meaningful oversight to protect users, minimize disinformation, and penalize hate speech and the undermining of democratic processes.

Marginalized people are often vulnerable in digital spaces. Online hate speech, threats and harassment, trolling, and fraud disproportionately affect women, racial and ethnic minorities, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Journalists and human rights defenders are also often at

1%
Just **1%** of the population of Eritrea has access to the internet, often through monitored internet cafes.

In the United States and United Kingdom, online hate speech rose by as much as **20%** during the COVID-19 pandemic.

20%

FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... ACTS... FAST

risk as they investigate and challenge powerful groups, corporations, and governments. Not only does this restrict participation in digital spaces, but it can also translate to physical violence and even death.

People with disabilities experience social exclusion nearly everywhere. Digital spaces are no exception. On the one hand, digital devices and platforms can facilitate movement, conversation, pursuit of leisure activities, and meaningful work. On the other, not all digital communication technologies are built accessibly from the ground up. Inclusive design considers all users. This can include user-friendly shortcuts, ways to easily undo accidental actions, simple design, and integrated screen-reading options. These design features make it easier for everyone to exercise their digital communication rights.

PROTECTING DIGITAL SPACES

Cultivating accessible and safe digital spaces is a task for everyone, including governments, tech corporations, civil society, and users.

- Regulations and laws should protect users rather than corporations. Laws should be oriented toward safeguarding people, especially those who are marginalized and those who use digital communication to defend human and civil rights.

- Corporations, from start-ups to Big Tech, should prioritize universal design and accessibility in all stages of developing digital communication technologies.

- Civil society, including churches and faith groups, can help marginalized and vulnerable people access digital spaces and exercise their communication rights. We can also nurture digital spaces dedicated to social and ecological justice, using platforms for nonviolence, just peace, and digital literacy.

- Individuals can choose open access, open source, and fair-trade technologies when possible. We can advocate for the right to repair devices. And we can report online harassment and disinformation and take steps to counter hate speech.

COMMUNICATION RIGHTS

Communication rights help overcome social, cultural, political, and technological barriers to accessing and safely enjoying digital communication tools and platforms. These fundamental rights ensure digital literacy, education and training, participation in debates, accessibility for all people, and the creation of safe digital spaces. These

rights also protect people from surveillance and censorship. They defend the freedom of the press, the right to dissent, and other human and civil rights. Communication rights guarantee digital communication for *all*.

When communities have access to reliable and safe digital communication, they are empowered. Digitally literate, protected, and connected people can effect real change in the development, use, and regulation of digital communication technologies. People can organize to claim and defend their rights, contributing to a transformative movement for digital justice.

CASE STUDY

Rapid transition to digitalized societies, accelerated because of the global pandemic, exacerbated social exclusion for those without access to digital tools and technologies. The People's Internet Initiative was launched in Latin America to look at how the digital era is both utopian and dystopian. The group has proposed public policy measures, alternative technologies, and ways to mitigate negative impacts in five key areas: work, education, agriculture and rural life, media and communication, and collective digital rights.

Research showed that school closings due to the pandemic made things worse for many in the region. Commercial education platforms contributed to privatization, and online learning privileged already-privileged students. In agriculture, digital technology favoured big firms, accelerated the commercialization of lands, and hurt small farm operations.

The internet is a basic public service and should remain so. Universal access should not imply universal exploitation. While data has become the basic input for wealth generation in the digital economy, it belongs to the people and should be protected. The proposals of the People's Internet Initiative include running digital technologies on a community basis, supporting free and open software, creating distributed platforms, providing training in digital literacy, and promoting technological autonomy. Critical mass is needed to move forward with these proposals . . . but to address these issues, we need to change the model.

—Based on a presentation by Sally Burch, executive director of the Latin America Information Agency (ALAI) at the September 2021 symposium on digital justice held by the World Council of Churches and World Association for Christian Communication.

CONNECTING OUR FAITH

The biblical prophets repeatedly called for justice that would "roll down like water" (Amos 5:24). Theological critiques of power apply to those who own and control our digital places of encounter. We must work for grassroots and faith-inspired resistance to these powers so that all may participate fully in digital spaces.

Learn to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed.

—*Isaiah 1:17*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Do you feel free to express yourself online? What hesitations do you have about what you share and how it will be used?

- Can you think of ways we can protect each other online and make digital public spaces safer for vulnerable and marginalized people?

- Do you know how your online personal data is being collected and used? Here is a 7-step process you can start with to understand your digital footprint and protect yourself in digital spaces.

- How can civil society, including faith communities, contribute positively to digital public spaces?

BEFORE YOU CONTINUE . . .

Read: Participatory Video for Citizen Mobilisation in South Africa (Tamara Plush, *Media Development*)

Watch: Presentation on Public Space (Goran Buldioski)

Do: Help make digital justice a global affair! Use your language skills to translate principles for digital justice into your own language.

3

WEAPONIZATION OF DIGITAL RESOURCES

> **" There is military investment in digital technologies, and the technologies are in turn militarized—increasing risk in situations of war and conflict.**
> *—A New Communications Paper for the 21st Century: A Vision of Digital Justice*

Snapshot: Digital communication tools and platforms provide people with powerful ways to build relationships and exercise human and civil rights. They can also help spread hate, violence, and lies, and undermine progress toward democracy. The weaponization of digital resources typically harms ethnic and racial minorities, women, refugees and migrants, people with disabilities, and certain religious groups.

Key terms: hate speech, fake news, disinformation, militarization.

WHAT IS THE WEAPONIZATION OF DIGITAL RESOURCES?

The transformative potential—both good and bad—of digital communication tools and technologies is enormous. On the one hand, we find opportunities for positive change, enhanced communication rights, creativity, and connection. On the other, there is abundant evidence that these same digital resources will be increasingly used for violence, destruction, and abuse. The weaponization of digital resources happens when they are used to inflict harm and damage on people, as well as on ecosystems and societies. Hate speech and cyberbullying further harm people who are already vulnerable. Fake news and disinformation harm trust in media and destabilize democracy. Massive military investment directs resources to war and away from education, healthcare, and climate justice. This damage is not digital alone. It easily fuels offline trauma, violence, and death, and contributes to how, when, and why people engage in conflicts and wars.

In a single year, **24,000** sympathizers of the so-called Islamic State terrorist group tweeted more than **17 million** times.

FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FA   FACTS...

HATE SPEECH

Hate speech can mean different things in different situations. Legal definitions and consequences are not the same everywhere in the world. There are, however, some consistencies that help shape our understanding of hate speech and its impact on people. First, hate speech and hateful content target groups or members of a group that share a trait like race or gender. For example, migrants and refugees may be the target of hate speech because of their religion or national origin. Second, hate requires an "other" and builds on negative stereotypes. Hate speech wants you to see fellow humans as different, strange, and threatening. It exaggerates our differences and suppresses anything that encourages empathy and understanding.

It is easy to be anonymous online. Too easy. There is little accountability for a lot of what we do in digital spaces, especially when we can hide behind avatars and usernames. This makes it more likely for us to say and do things that we would not do offline. Sharing hateful content takes little effort and is often a quick reaction. The more we come across hateful content, the more it becomes a normal part of our online experience. In contrast, diffusing it through dialogue, coordinated action, and reporting takes much more concentrated effort.

A European Union study revealed that more than **6 out of 10** girls experience harassment on social media and nearly **4 out of 10** people with disabilities are victims of hate speech.

Publishers known for producing fake news stories get up to **6** times more interaction than reliable sources on Facebook.

FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... AST

FAKE NEWS AND DISINFORMATION

Social media ushered in a new era of digital communication and allowed for the rise of fake news, misinformation, and disinformation. Fake news is untrue or misleading information presented as news. It is deceitful and often intended to confuse, harm, or generate profit. Misinformation is false information and unsubstantiated claims; disinformation is the same but spread with the *intent* to cause harm, destruction, or chaos.

> *Politically motivated digital campaigns of "fake news" undermine democratic processes and responsible journalism.*
>
> —*Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age*

Anyone can spread fake news and disinformation online with little accountability or consequence. Social media algorithms make it worse by rewarding posts that receive a lot of attention or interaction. This means that dangerous, hateful, and extreme content spreads easily. On Twitter, for example, false news is 70 percent more likely to be retweeted and spreads much faster than factual, real stories.

MILITARY AND TERRORIST USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Digital technologies are also increasingly used for war, terrorism, and violent conflict. Military investment drives the development of autonomous weapons, drones, and mass surveillance. Political superpowers compete for the leading edge in artificial intelligence, driving a new kind of arms race. Corporations and academic institutions contribute through funding and partnerships, with everyone eager to be at the forefront of a digital revolution.

Paramilitary and terrorist groups also leverage digital tools to achieve their aims. Social media provide a free and nearly unfettered platform for fanatical and violent content, and help find funders and allies for extremist causes. The dark web facilitates illegal activity, like cyberattacks, surveillance, trafficking of weapons and people, and more. Healthcare data systems are especially vulnerable because of their trove of personal information.

DIGITAL RESOURCES FOR HOPE SPEECH AND JUST PEACE

The weaponization of digital resources is widespread and well-funded. There is, however, still reason to hope. We can work together to counter these trends. Digital communication also contributes to the democratization of societies and provides people with an opportunity to express themselves and take coordinated action. There is real power in our hands.

Critically evaluating all digital content and our own online behaviour is an important first step. We can stop the spread of fake news and disinformation; we can counter hate speech with hope speech; we can help educate others about online risks. We can also advocate for and accompany victims of online hate speech, bullying, and cyberattacks as we would victims of other forms of violence.

Civil society, including faith groups, can effect large-scale changes. For example, there is a growing global movement toward banning lethal autonomous weapons systems and increasing interest in cyberpeace initiatives. We can also support grassroots and community initiatives to develop digital communication technologies that promote nonviolence and just peace at the local level, including mobile apps, community radio, and social media campaigns.

CASE STUDY

Islamophobia is a serious problem across many communities and societies, both off- and online. Students at the Blanquerna Observatory on Media, Religion and Culture in the Raval district of Barcelona decided to take on this problem using their education and communication skills. Living in a diverse metropolitan area with more than 100 nationalities and 80 languages, they wanted to use social media and relationship building to change extremist narratives.

The campaign used the #BeTheKey hashtag to highlight the injustice of Islamophobia and empowered people to fight against it. Actions included workshops on gendered Islamophobia in the media, a Wikipedia marathon to improve content on Islam, and an Instagram exhibition with people showing how they are "the key" to combatting Islamophobia.

While the campaign started in one neighbourhood of one city, it spread quickly throughout Europe and beyond. The initiative shows that despite the size and scope of online injustice, corrective steps can be taken to ensure that all enjoy the freedom and possibilities of our digitalized world.

> —*Prepared by the Blanquerna Observatory, Barcelona, for the September 2021 symposium on digital justice held by the World Council of Churches and World Association for Christian Communication.*

CONNECTING OUR FAITH

Just and lasting peace requires a transformation of our digital spaces, as well as physical ones. We see through the life of Jesus the importance of loving both your neighbour and your enemy. Through digital communication we are neighbours with all of humanity, brought into relationship by the web and social media. We can bring to these connections love, truth, hope, repentance, and forgiveness, thus creating spaces for digital discipleship.

Owe no one anything, except to love one another;
for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

—*Romans 13:8*

And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

—*Hebrews 10:24–25*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- How can we find and support trustworthy sources of information in an age of disinformation and fake news?

- How is online abuse and bullying different from offline abuse? How is it similar? How are the two connected?

- How can civil society, including churches and faith groups, use counterspeech and nonviolent communication in response to hate speech and disinformation?

- How can you protect yourself against the weaponization of digital resources? How can you protect others in your communities and throughout cyberspace?

BEFORE YOU CONTINUE . . .

Read: Breaking Down the Social Media Divides: A Guide for Individuals and Communities to Address Hate Online

Watch: Simple steps to break down our social media divides

Do: Start practising some of the Counterspeech DOs and DON'Ts.

Check out tips on How To Identify Fake News.

4

SURVEILLANCE, CENSORSHIP, AND PRIVACY

> **"**
> *The universal challenges of the use of data and loss of privacy are compounded by arbitrary government control, national digital laws and guidelines that are vague and fraught with loopholes, internet blackouts that clamp down on online dissent, and unwarranted state surveillance.*
>
> —*Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age*

Snapshot: The internet, social media, and smart devices put billions of people into constant contact. This allows for the exchange of personal information on a massive scale. There are positive sides to surveillance: keeping children safe, tackling trafficking, and responding to human-made and natural calamities. However, it has also created a digital environment ripe for harmful surveillance, restricted freedoms, and loss of privacy. Governments and corporations clamp down on dissent, limit press freedom, and expose human rights defenders to grave threats.
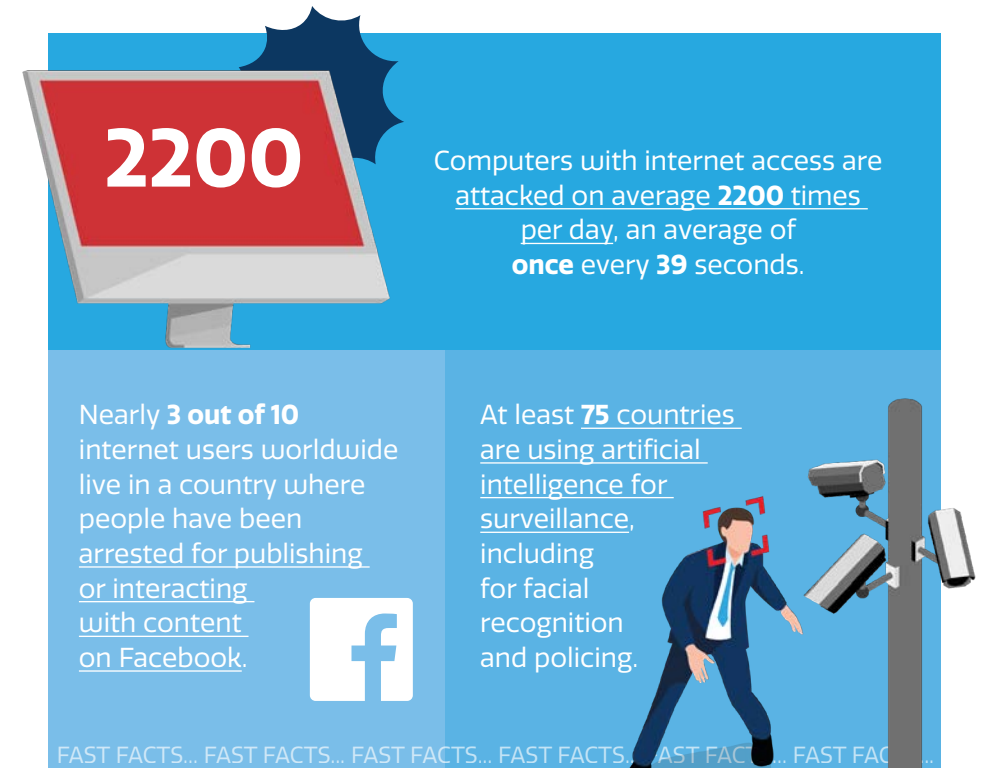
Key terms: surveillance, monitoring, privacy, censorship

THE PANDEMIC AND PRIVACY

The start of 2020 saw the onset of a global pandemic and, along with it, a new era of digital surveillance and threats to privacy. The need for a coordinated and widespread pandemic response provided a parallel opportunity for dramatically-increased digital surveillance, data collection, and loss of privacy. Our digital footprints became an even more valuable resource.

Digital communication devices were at the heart of many countries' pandemic measures. Governments rolled out contact tracing apps and digital vaccine certificates. Passenger locator forms, and facial and license plate recognition were used to trace and limit the movement of people. These tools were used to enforce lockdowns, monitor quarantine compliance, and incentivize people to get tested and vaccinated.

Rapid introduction of these digital measures prompted new ethical challenges. For example, existing surveillance tools, like cameras used to monitor neighbourhoods at risk of terrorist attacks, were instead used to monitor pandemic rule compliance. In some countries, data from contact tracing apps were shared with police and security forces.

2200 Computers with internet access are attacked on average **2200** times per day, an average of **once** every **39** seconds.

Nearly **3 out of 10** internet users worldwide live in a country where people have been arrested for publishing or interacting with content on Facebook.

At least **75** countries are using artificial intelligence for surveillance, including for facial recognition and policing.

FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS...

MASS SURVEILLANCE; MASS INEQUALITY

The pandemic response is only one example of how digital communication tools have been co-opted for surveillance. Digital surveillance includes monitoring peoples' online behaviour, collecting personal digital data, transmitting sensitive information, using facial recognition, and deploying artificial intelligence to identify patterns in the reams of digital data we each generate every day.

China's well-known private and government social credit systems are an example of digital surveillance *par excellence*. The systems analyze all kinds of regular behaviour and habits like shopping, buying train tickets, and paying bills. The data, once crunched, yield a score of apparent trustworthiness that is used to reward or penalize people accordingly. Everything from access to healthcare, movement within China, finding jobs, and getting good schools for your children is potentially impacted by this score.

Migrants, refugees, and ethnic minorities are among those most at risk from mass digital surveillance. Facial recognition technologies, notoriously

guilty of bias against women and people of colour, are deployed in policing. Refugees and migrants face new digital barriers as well. So-called "smart" border management uses facial recognition technologies, drone surveillance of borders, and automated decision processes in asylum claims. These technologies are often used in already-unfavourable migration settings, making it even riskier or more difficult to seek asylum. Surveillance through these means becomes a digital barbed wire fence, drawing attention and resources away from solutions like safe and legal pathways for migrants and refugees.

Big tech companies, like Meta (Facebook's parent company) and Alphabet (Google's parent company), collect an enormous amount of personal data about their users. They compete for our attention and engagement to sell advertising, which contributes the largest share of their billions in revenue. Our time, our stories, our lives become a commodity in the new digital economy. Google has a record of everything you have ever searched for, everything you have ever watched on YouTube, and possibly every email you have sent and picture you have taken with your phone. One user requested their data from Google and the result was <u>large enough to fill more than 3 million average-sized Word documents</u>. This data is a currency, one that is used to push towering profits even higher. It is also a currency used to exercise control over people—to affect political opinions and consumer habits and to suppress dissent and freedom of expression.

CENSORSHIP AND CONTROL

The challenges of surveillance are compounded by inadequate national laws and government and corporate overreach. Safeguards to protect us and our data are few. What protections exist are poorly enforced by Big Tech and the governments that should be regulating those companies. This creates digital spaces where it is all too easy to silence dissent, restrict press freedom, and threaten human rights defenders.

In many instances, surveillance seems voluntary. We choose to carry mobile devices, we click "accept all" on terms and conditions, and we share *a lot* on social media. In practice, our digital and offline lives are so intertwined that we have little true choice in how and when we are monitored. Some people have no choice at all.

Mass monitoring allows for easy censorship of online activities, and fear of it promotes self-censorship. For example, an investigative journalist might not pursue or publish online a certain story for fear of being monitored or harmed. A woman researcher might not publish a study on misogyny in religious circles for fear of being ostracized or attacked online or offline.

PRIVACY IS POWER

Surveillance and the harvesting of data through digital means deprive people of privacy, negatively impacting both online and offline activities, and can even be dangerous for many people around the world. For marginalized and persecuted communities, surveillance is a new and enormously powerful way to maintain social exclusion and the vulnerability of some people and groups. Media monopolies and complicit governments limit freedom of speech through censorship and surveillance while allowing and even encouraging hate speech and disinformation.

Communication rights activists advocate for personal control over one's data and information. This includes freedom from unlawful and excessive surveillance, transparency about how personal data is being collected and used, and the right to have personal data deleted. Governments and corporations have a further responsibility to provide infrastructure and platforms that are secure, minimally vulnerable to hacking and cyberattacks, and that communicate transparently with people about how they are monitored and for what purposes.

Control over data and privacy helps guarantee other civil and human rights. For example, privacy contributes to being able to exercise the right to vote and hold elections that are free from interference and manipulation. Freedom of religion, expression, and opinion are also protected by allowing open worship and exchange of ideas without censorship and monitoring.

CASE STUDY

The Philippine Digital Justice Initiative unpacks the characteristics, impact, and way forward in an increasingly digital world in the Philippine context. The Philippines is a global digital leader, with 80 percent of its 110 million people active on social media.

Through input gathered from the information and communication technology sector, policymakers, educators, internet users, and others, the Digital Justice Initiative examined the digital world through a social justice lens. Hijacked democracies emerged as a pressing digital justice issue.

Digital communication technologies are being used for state repression, social engineering, and profiteering, leading to hijacked democracies. A 2018 report showed that the private data of some

1.2 million Filipino Facebook users was harvested by Cambridge Analytica. The data was used by a parent company engaging in social engineering to influence the behaviour of certain groups of people. Reports showed this company operating through local proxies with clients that included President Rodrigo Duterte.

In response, the Philippine Digital Justice Initiative published a declaration in pursuit of digital justice, which calls for safeguarding digital data and protecting online privacy. Governments must put into effect standards and regulations to ensure data privacy and security, as well as quality of service. Information must be free from totalitarian control. Data storage must be decentralized and data monopolies, such as the one held by Facebook, must be broken.

Data rights are also human rights. Data about us is an extension of our identities. Everyone has the right to data privacy, and the right to choose with whom they share their information. Our laws and policies must protect this right and must not legitimize mass surveillance.

—Based on a presentation by Jan Michael Yap, chair of the Computer Professionals' Union of the Philippines, at the September 2021 symposium on digital justice held by the World Council of Churches and World Association for Christian Communication.

CONNECTING OUR FAITH

Humans were created for relationship by an intrinsically relational God. Through relationship and our connectedness with all of creation, we discover and live out our humanity. Digital communication tools are a gift to be used to bring us more fully and authentically into relationship. Censorship and unwarranted surveillance, including harvesting our private data, restrict digital communication and limit our freedom to enter and nurture relationships with the entire body of Christ.

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

—Isaiah 58:6

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Have you experienced changes in surveillance and privacy since the start of the pandemic?

- What, if any, surveillance is needed to ensure peace and health, prevent conflict, and respond to natural disasters? Who would you trust to be responsible for surveillance and handling data?

- What, if any, are legitimate uses of digital communication tools for surveillance? Why?

- How can civil society protect privacy and advocate for non-surveillance, while safeguarding vulnerable people and groups?

BEFORE YOU CONTINUE . . .

Read: The Enemy on Your Wrist

Watch: The Social Dilemma

Do: Use this checklist for schools to see what steps you can take today to protect yourself and others online. Share with a friend, colleague, or housemate.

5

DIGITALITY AND MARGINALIZED PEOPLES

—*A New Communications Paper for the 21st Century: A Vision of Digital Justice*

Snapshot: Digital communication technologies can be a powerful force for inclusion, justice, and democracy, so that all people can be heard and exercise their right to communicate. These technologies can also be tools for oppression and exclusion, used to harm and oppress marginalized people and groups. There can be no digital justice without social and ecological justice for all.
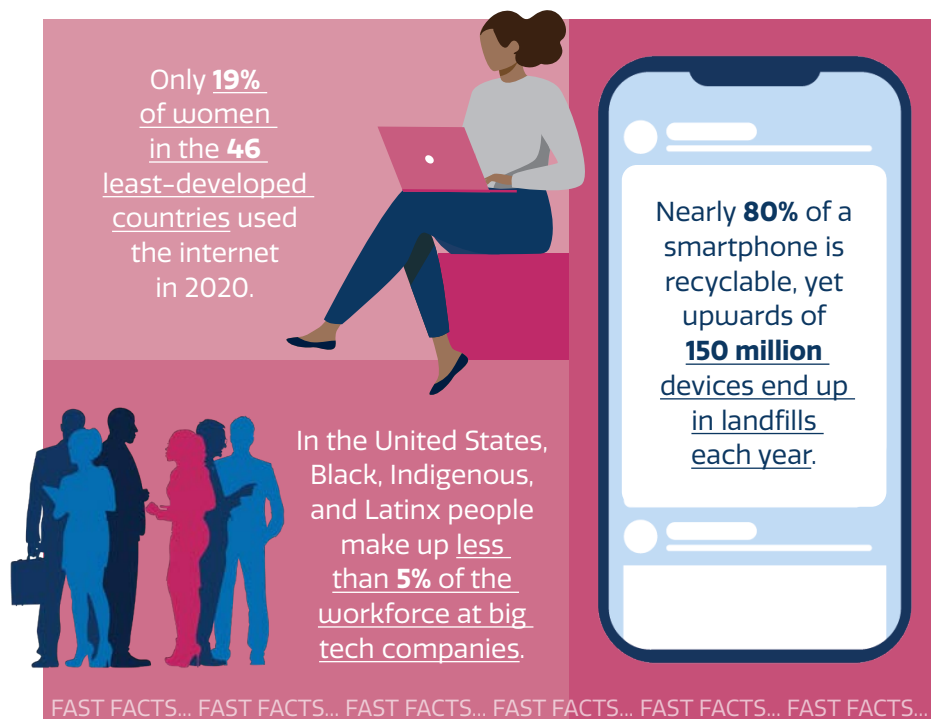
Key terms: gender, race, social justice

DIGITAL JUSTICE IS SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE

Social, ecological, and digital justice are inseparable. The patterns of marginalization and oppression that we see so clearly in our world are replicated—and often amplified—online. People who suffer violence, who are denied human rights, who are ignored or harassed, also find themselves marginalized in digital communication spaces. Your experience with digital communication technologies is an extension of the power and privilege you have (or don't have) offline. Women, ethnic and racial minorities, Indigenous Peoples, refugees and migrants, and people who are economically disadvantaged, are among those who experience significant exclusion and oppression in online spaces. In this chapter we will look specifically at digital justice for women and racial and ethnic minorities. We will also look at digital technologies' impacts on the environment.

In the same way, digital justice must be seen in the context of gender equity, racism, environmental sustainability, economic justice, intergenerational relationships, and so much more.

—*A New Communications Paper for the 21st Century: A Vision of Digital Justice*

Only **19%** of women in the **46** least-developed countries used the internet in 2020.

Nearly **80%** of a smartphone is recyclable, yet upwards of **150 million** devices end up in landfills each year.

In the United States, Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people make up less than **5%** of the workforce at big tech companies.

FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS... FAST FACTS...

GENDER JUSTICE

Gender significantly impacts how people access, use, and experience digital communication technologies. Digital communication technologies can benefit women across personal, educational, and economic arenas. They can help create community, improve access to resources and information, provide opportunities for job training and education, and allow women to earn a living. These are all factors that help women live with independence and freedom from violence. Active participation in digital spaces can contribute to gender justice across all domains of life.

Pervasive gender inequality, however, severely limits the potential of digital communication technologies for women. Women are silenced and excluded by digital divides, challenges in accessing digital communication tools and platforms, and increased online attacks and harassment. Women also experience significant digital inequality because of underrepresentation and stereotypes in media reporting and professions.

The balance of power in politics and technology favours men. There is a poverty of women in leadership in both domains. This results in little action for gender justice in digital communication tools and platforms.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

Racism, prejudice, and stereotyping negatively affect people in digital spaces, often intersecting with other forms of marginalization, including ableism and misogyny. The exclusion and oppression of racial and ethnic minorities online exacerbate the problems that exist in broader society. This is a result of decades, even centuries, of systemic racism, colonialism, and injustice.

The marginalization of racial and ethnic minorities is found everywhere in digital communication technologies. These groups are underrepresented in the development of digital technologies as well as in leadership, policy, and education roles. Online treatment of racial and ethnic minorities can also be radically different than for majority groups. Black social media stars report that their content is often used without credit by white content creators and that they receive fewer endorsement deals and lower pay.

Facial recognition technologies have well-documented racial biases. Accuracy of these technologies consistently improves with lighter skin tones and when used on men's faces versus women. But the bias does not stop with images. Natural language processing—the computing techniques used to analyze our speech and writing—is also flawed. The technology still struggles to recognize hate speech and racist language, especially when context dependent. Language analysis tools are also built using "standard" language and fail to capture the expressions, accents, and speech patterns of minority dialects.

Yet, digital communication technologies have also been a powerful force for racial justice. Social media, being free and widely accessible, gives people an opportunity to easily reach a broad audience. This has given rise to a generation of social justice influencers, who use their online clout to advocate for social and ecological justice. TikTok has become a space not just for viral dance moves, but for decolonization and antiracism education. The hashtag #blacklivesmatter helped coalesce a movement for racial justice that eventually spread around the world.

CARE FOR CREATION

Ecological justice is interwoven into all the social and digital justice concerns we have looked at so far. The rise of a digitalized world has also had significant ecological impacts. E-waste, including millions of digital devices, is largely discarded in landfills. It includes dangerous chemicals that contaminate soil and water. This waste is often sent from wealthy countries to poorer ones, where local populations are left to deal with the environmental and health impact of tonnes of irreparable electronic waste.

Planned obsolescence, a deliberate strategy by manufacturers to make products unusable in a short period of time, results in unsustainable consumption and needless waste. It unnecessarily limits the lifespan of our digital communication tools, causing harm to vulnerable communities and ecological devastation throughout the planet. Products and devices designed to break and fail, lack of software updates, minor changes to make consumers want the latest and greatest device, and limited or prohibitively expensive repair options are all examples of planned obsolescence in the tech world.

Digital communication tools and platforms also impact the environment through resource extraction and energy consumption. Most digital devices require resources found in poorer countries, where people—including children—suffer horrible labour conditions. Such resource extraction has devastating effects on local ecosystems and creates waste that can harm many generations to come.

Our daily web and social media use consumes massive amounts of (often unrenewable) energy. Computer networks run all over the world, at all hours of the day. The "Cloud"— all of the computers and services you access through the internet—now has a bigger carbon footprint than the more than 115,000 flights that take off and land each day.

CASE STUDY

In India, women and girls have far less access to mobile devices and the internet than men and boys. Only 42 percent of women have ever used the internet. This creates barriers to growth and development: knowledge, banking, healthcare, education, and more are all linked to online access. The digital gender gap threatens to roll back critical gains made over the past decades.

As many as 4 out of 5 households have no computers. Girls have less access to digital devices than boys, even in households that own them. Financial constraints are compounded by patriarchy and gender discrimination. Mobile phones and the internet are a passage to the world denied to women and girls, controlling their agency and voice. This contributes to the absence of women in the development of digital and online technologies. It creates a discriminatory online world.

The near absence of women and girls from digital spaces causes hesitancy among these groups. They need support in learning how to use digital devices safely and with confidence.

Digital and media literacy for women and girls is a critical justice issue. Ideosync Media Combine undertakes programmes in this area, including running digital literacy training in urban slums and producing innovative feminist content. The organization ensures the involvement of women and girls from migrant and minority communities, reflecting the specific intersectional needs of certain groups. Media literacy is not only a digital justice issue but a gender justice issue too. It must become a core part of education, viewed through a feminist lens.

—Based on a presentation by Venu Arora, co-founder and director of Ideosync Media Combine, at the September 2021 symposium on digital justice held by the World Council of Churches and World Association for Christian Communication.

CONNECTING OUR FAITH

All people are created in the image of God, reflecting the goodness of our Creator. The online marginalization of women and racial and ethnic minorities denies people their full humanity. Digital communication is an extension of our identity and digital spaces are an extension of our shared human fellowship. The biblical preferential option for the poor includes digital spaces where people also live and move and have their being.

Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.

—Proverbs 31:9

Being part of God's creation also comes with the obligation to care for the whole of our world, encouraging its flourishing for generations to come. We are called to extend care to all creatures that inhabit the earth (Gen. 1:26). And we must understand that we are caretakers, not owners, of the physical world, treating it with respect rather than exploiting it for short-term gain.

The land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land.

—Leviticus 25:23–24

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Have you experienced digital marginalization? What social factors contribute to your good and bad experiences online?
- How can you include, listen to, and amplify marginalized voices online?
- How can civil society, including faith groups, use digital communication technologies to work for social and ecological justice?
- What steps can you take to reduce the ecological impact of your web and social media use?

BEFORE YOU CONTINUE . . .

Read: *Who Makes the News?: 6th Global Media Monitoring Project* (See the "Highlights" section for a summary of findings.)

Delivering Together for Inclusive Development: Digital Access to Information and Knowledge for Persons with Disabilities (UNESCO)

Watch: Rethink IT Campaign (Greenpeace Media)

Do: Find the hashtags used for social and ecological justice in your community and country. Use them to amplify marginalized voices.

CONCLUSION: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The reflections, facts, case studies, and questions in this booklet shape an image of digital justice. It is a vision that tries to hold the local and global in balance, listen to and protect spaces for marginalized voices, and draw on wisdom acquired through ecological and social justice efforts. Seeking justice together, within a global fellowship, requires study, practice, and action.

The manifesto *Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age* provides a starting point for dialogue and advocacy. It outlines principles for bridging digital divides, ensuring access and communication rights, creating diverse and inclusive digital spaces, and using digital communication tools for justice and peace.

Rooted in the history of communication rights, these principles provide for a world in which:

- Everyone is entitled to communicate, to inform, and to share knowledge. This requires equitable access to communication infrastructures and the right to free expression.
- Everyone is entitled to participate in the information and communication society with particular consideration for minority and vulnerable groups. This requires inclusive and participatory governance of media infrastructures and digital platforms.
- Everyone is entitled to fair and unbiased public communication. This requires ethical norms, accountability, and redress for misrepresentation.
- Everyone is entitled to dignity and respect. This requires transparency and accountability of media and digital platforms.
- Everyone is entitled to privacy and control of their information, including deleting their data, provided they are not engaged in human rights abuses or criminal activity. This should be inherent and intrinsic to each person's digital identity and requires legal frameworks that balance the right to privacy and the protection of human rights.
- Everyone is entitled to their own cultural and linguistic identity. This requires spaces for linguistic and cultural diversity, and access to ownership and control of media.
- Everyone is entitled to communication skills and media literacy. This requires culturally appropriate training and building dialogue, conversation, listening, openness, and critical thinking skills.

- Everyone is entitled to sustainable power sources to enable their digital or electronic media. This requires access to technologies such as solar or wind power.

- Everyone is entitled to affordable devices or public access to devices in safe spaces. This requires economic resources as well as the right to repair.

These principles are rooted in communication rights and longstanding commitments to ecological and social justice within the global ecumenical fellowship. We have the opportunity to identify and model digital justice in education, mission and evangelism, and work on human rights, as well as in our advocacy with international organizations and interfaith partners on the path of justice and peace. As outlined in *A New Communications Paper for the 21st Century: A Vision of Digital Justice*, we commit ourselves to:

- Re-imagining our digital public sphere continuously, emphasizing democracy, fundamental rights, mutual accountability, and solidarity.

- Raising awareness and promoting educational programmes, including theological formation, to equip ourselves to face the challenges of digital transformation.

- Working with state and civil society actors and faith groups to create spaces and channels that are inclusive, accessible, interactive, and participatory, promoting racial justice, gender justice, digital justice, expanding public spaces, and creating visions for the future.

- Encouraging theological and ethical critiques of digital transformation, including the powers that operate unregulated, commercially-driven digital spaces.

- Creating an informed, grassroots, faith-inspired resistance to the forces challenging human dignity that flourish in digital spaces.

- Developing cross-cutting programmes of action to create this re-imagined reality in different contexts.

Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times.
—Psalm 106:3

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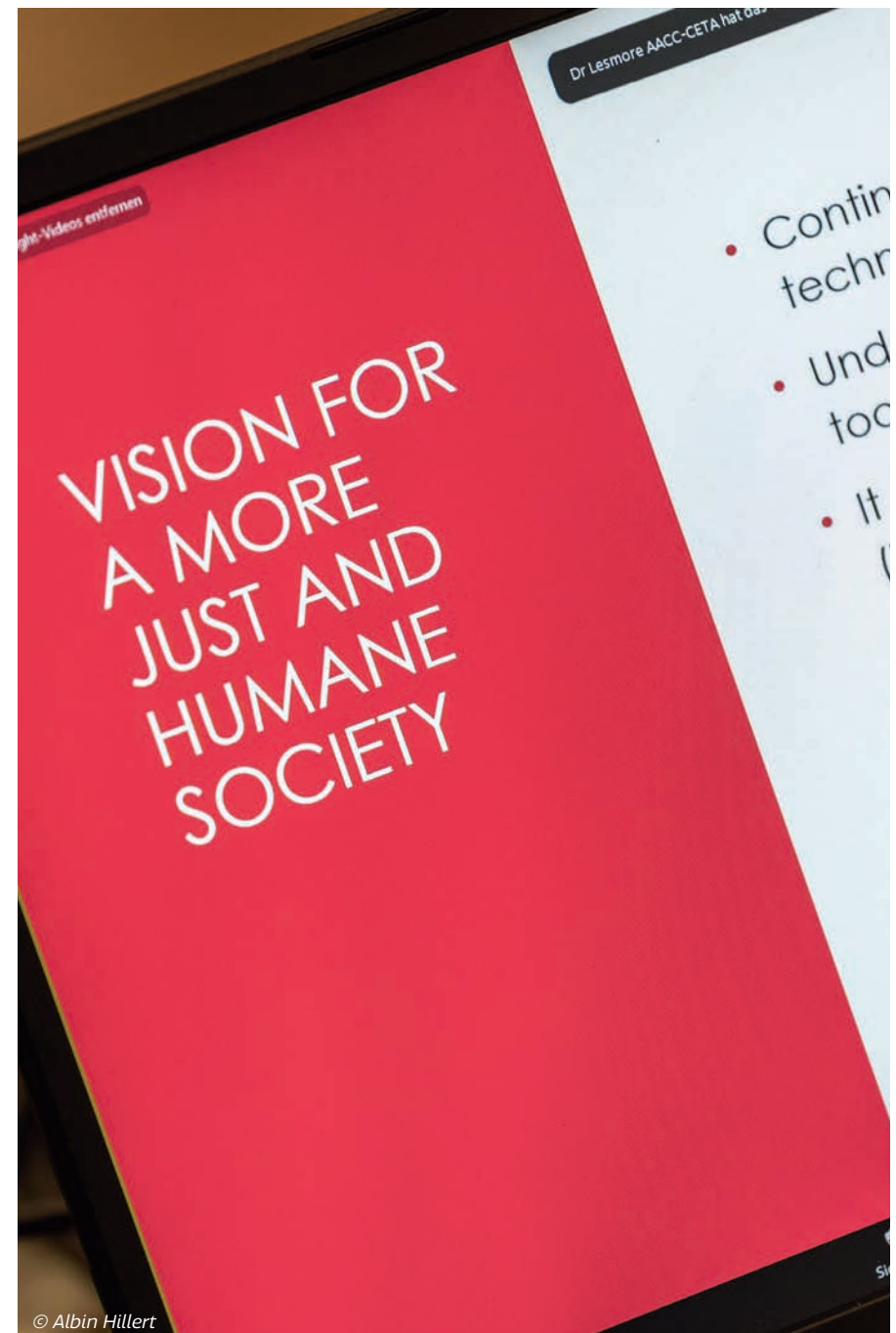
RESOURCES

The World Association for Christian Communication has been dedicated to communication rights for decades, following digital justice issues as they emerge. WACC has published extensively on digital justice through its own resources and in collaboration with partners.

The World Council of Churches contributes to ecumenical, international dialogue on digital justice through many publications and resources.

Below is a listing of resources that appear in this guide, along with some additional sources that you may find useful in your further reflections on digital justice.

GENERAL

A New Communications Paper for the 21st Century: A Vision of Digital Justice

Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age

Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age (Resources from the WACC, WCC Symposium 2021)

Digital Justice Manifesto: A Call to Own Our Digital Future

The Great Transformation: A Field Guide for the Next Economy

Impacts of Digital Transformation on Communities and Societies (Ellen Ueberschär, *Media Development*)

The 9 Principles to Promote Social Justice in the Digital Age (video)

Our Digital Ecology (Dean Dettloff, *Media Development*)

Revisiting MacBride: Communicative Justice Today

Towards a Vision of Digital Justice

Wanted SDG 18

CHAPTER 1. DIGITAL DIVIDES IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY

Communication Rights . . . Joining Up the Dots

Democratizing the Public Sphere (Philip Lee, *Media Development*)

Democratizing the Public Sphere

Digital Media and Divide in Ethiopia (Tedla Desta, *Media Development*)

Public Service Media and Public Service Internet Manifesto

Sexism and the Digital Divide (video)

*The Spirit of Truth in a Digital Ag*e (Th*e Ecumenical Review* 72, no. 2 [April 2020])

CHAPTER 2. ACCESSING DIGITAL SPACES

Claiming and Reclaiming the Digital World as a Public Space: Experiences and Insights from Feminists in the Middle East and North Africa

Democratizing the Public Sphere

Expanding Public Communication Spaces

Expanding Shrinking Communication Spaces

In What Ways Has the Digital Era Changed the Notion of Public Space?

Participatory Video for Citizen Mobilisation in South Africa (Tamara Plush, *Media Development*)

Presentation by Goran Buldioski at the Symposium on Communication for Social Justice in a Digital Age (video)

CHAPTER 3. WEAPONIZATION OF DIGITAL RESOURCES

Breaking Down the Social Media Divides: A Guide for Individuals and Communities to Address Hate Online

Counterspeech DOs and DON'Ts

Double Standards in Social Media Content Moderation

How to Spot Fake News

Simple Steps to Break Down Our Social Media Divides

Sticking to the Facts, Building Trust: Our Cure for Disinformation

CHAPTER 4. SURVEILLANCE, CENSORSHIP, AND PRIVACY

The Enemy on Your Wrist

Internet Safety Checklist (Cleveland [Tennessee] Metro School District)

The Social Dilemma (Documentary)

CHAPTER 5. DIGITALITY AND MARGINALIZED PEOPLES

Delivering Together for Inclusive Development: Digital Access to Information and Knowledge for Persons with Disabilities

Enabling People's Voices to Be Heard

Engaging with the Digital

Impact of New Technologies on Human Rights

RethinkIt Campaign

Who Makes the News?: Global Media Monitoring Project (See the "Highlights" section for a summary of findings.)

FOR THE FULL RESOURCE LIST WITH LINKS, SCAN THIS QR CODE OR VISIT

HTTPS://WACCGLOBAL.ORG/RESOURCES/ DIGITAL-JUSTICE/DIGITAL-JUSTICE-STUDY-GUIDE