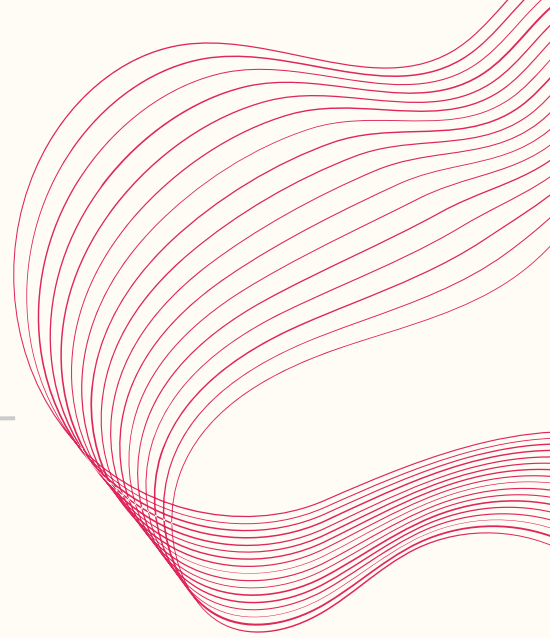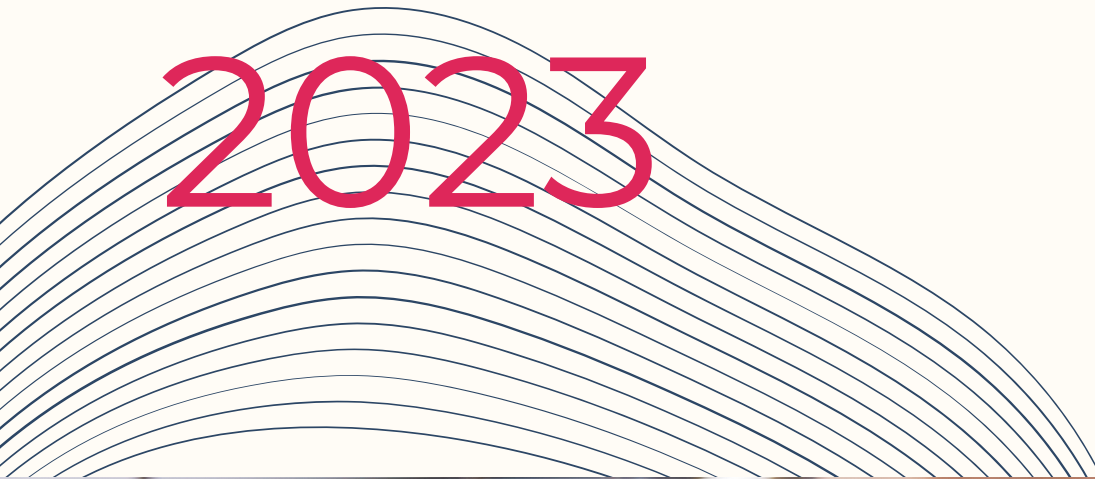# THE FORESIGHT FOUNDATION

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ANNUAL REPORT

2023

INTRODUCTION

Digital technology plays a significant role in modern society, providing access to information, services, and opportunities.

However, a growing concern within the United Kingdom is the issue of digital poverty, which refers to the lack of access, skills, and affordability of digital technologies.

This report aims to assess the current state of digital poverty in the UK, its impact on individuals and communities, and potential solutions to bridge the digital divide.

Defining Digital Poverty.

Digital poverty encompasses multiple dimensions that hinder individuals from fully participating in the digital age. It includes the following elements:

a. Lack of Access: Many individuals in the UK lack access to reliable internet connectivity and suitable devices, such as computers, smartphones, or tablets.

b. Limited Digital Skills: Insufficient digital skills hinder people's ability to use digital tools effectively, navigate online platforms, and access essential services.

c. Affordability Barriers: High costs associated with internet services, devices, and relevant training pose financial challenges for disadvantaged individuals and households.

THE EXTENT OF DIGITAL POVERTY IN THE UK.

To assess the extent of digital poverty in the UK, it is crucial to consider various factors, including demographics, geography, and socioeconomic disparities. Some key points to consider are:

Regional Disparities: Rural areas and regions with lower socioeconomic status often experience greater challenges in accessing reliable internet connections, exacerbating digital poverty.

Vulnerable Groups: Individuals from lower-income households, elderly individuals, people with disabilities, and minority communities are more likely to face digital poverty due to limited resources and knowledge.

Educational Impact: Students from digitally disadvantaged backgrounds may face difficulties in accessing online learning resources and keeping pace with their peers, further exacerbating educational inequalities.

1.9 MILLION
Households in the UK do not have access to the internet at home.

(Source: Office for National Statistics, 2021)

9 MILLION
Adults in the UK lack essential digital skills, such as using email, conducting online searches, or completing online forms.

(Source: Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index, 2020)

27%
Of those earning less than £12,500 per year lacking internet access at home.

(Source: Office for National Statistics, 2021)

THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL POVERTY.

Digital poverty has wide-ranging implications for individuals and society as a whole:

a. Social Exclusion: Limited access to digital platforms can isolate individuals from social interactions, job opportunities, online services, and government initiatives.

b. Economic Disadvantage: Inability to access online job opportunities and digital skills training can hinder employment prospects and income growth.

c. Educational Inequality: Students without adequate digital resources may struggle with remote learning, leading to academic disparities and limited educational attainment.

d. Health and Well-being: Lack of access to online health services, and digital support networks can impact physical and mental well-being.

THE ISSUE

These statistics highlight the significant challenges faced by individuals and communities in the UK regarding digital poverty, including limited access, skills, and affordability. It underscores the need for comprehensive initiatives to bridge the digital divide and promote digital inclusion nationwide.

Our aim is to ensure that every individual, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status, has access to technology and digital opportunities. We understand that technology is an essential tool for personal and professional development, and we strive to provide equal access to it for all.

32%

In rural areas, 32% of households rely on mobile networks for internet access, compared to 3% in urban areas.

(Source: Ofcom, 2020)

15%

The North East and North West regions of England have the highest proportion of adults without basic digital skills, at 15% and 14% respectively.

(Source: Office for National Statistics, 2021)

The Foresight Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation committed to closing the digital divide and promoting digital equity.

ADDRESSING DIGITAL POVERTY

Addressing digital poverty requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach involving government, private sector, and civil society collaboration. Some potential solutions include:
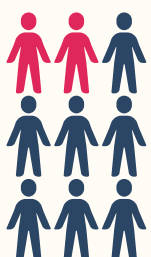
Infrastructure Development: Increasing investment in broadband infrastructure, particularly in underserved rural areas, to ensure reliable and affordable internet access for all.

Affordability Initiatives: Implementing schemes to reduce the cost of internet services and digital devices for low-income households, such as subsidies or discounted plans.

Digital Skills Training: Expanding digital literacy programs to improve individuals' skills, focusing on disadvantaged groups and incorporating initiatives within educational institutions and community centres.

Partnerships and Collaboration: Encouraging collaboration between public, private, and non-profit sectors to provide free or low-cost devices, internet connectivity, and training resources.

Policy Support: Implementing policies that promote digital inclusion and prioritise digital poverty reduction as a part of the national agenda.

1.8 MILLION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 1.8 million children in the UK had no access to a device suitable for online learning.

(Source: Ofcom, 2021)

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CONCLUSION

Digital poverty poses significant challenges in the UK, limiting opportunities for social, economic, and educational advancement. Addressing this issue requires a multi-pronged approach involving infrastructure development, affordability initiatives, digital skills training, and policy support.

By bridging the digital divide, the UK can strive toward a more inclusive and equitable digital society, empowering individuals and communities to thrive in the digital age.

THE MISSION

To educate and empower disadvantaged communities, eradicating the digital divide and creating a technologically inclusive society.

THE VISION

Digitally excluded communities have equal access to the tools, education and opportunities required to succeed as become digitally efficient and future leaders in the technology landscape.

CORE VALUES

The core values The Foresight Foundation is built on are as follows; Engage, Educate and Empower.

We will engage and challenge stakeholders, businesses and leaders to join the mission in tackling digital exclusion, eradicating any possible divide.

We will educate disadvantaged communities, providing them with the skills, knowledge and confidence to succeed.

We will empower the communities we work with to have the confidence and competence to become leaders within the digital landscape.

OVERVIEW

The Foresight Foundation is focused on closing the digital divide among disadvantaged communities in Greater Manchester.

We provide specialist workshops, tutoring, and mentoring in schools, based on the ICT curriculum. By doing this, we aim to help students develop the skills they need to succeed in the digital age.

What sets us apart is that our purpose is set out amongst our social impact mission. We believe that everyone deserves equal access to the tools and knowledge required to thrive in today's digital landscape, regardless of their background or status within the community.

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Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. If you have any questions or would like to discuss our findings further, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

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