

Everyone deserves digital access



Imagine being disconnected from
loved ones, learning and earning.
January 2025 Report



Everyone deserves digital access but *1 in 4 Australians* are missing out.⁷

1 in 4 Australians are digitally excluded. That's millions of Australians without access to basic digital skills and the tools to participate in today's world.

Computers and mobiles are powerful tools. Most of us can't imagine life without them but this is the reality for too many. Digital inclusion isn't just nice to have, it is a must have in today's society, but it isn't just devices that many Australians don't have access to - it is also access to the internet and the training to use it.

Imagine having no computer, no phone or no internet in your everyday life and try to study, find work or keep in touch. That is a reality for many people across Australia.

Let's work to close that gap, one device at a time.

A photograph of a woman with short blonde hair and red-rimmed glasses, sitting at a desk. She is wearing a white and maroon long-sleeved top. She has her hand to her chin, looking thoughtfully at the camera. In front of her is an open book and a laptop. The background is a bright, modern interior with a window and some plants.

The digital divide *affects* people of all ages

Summary

What is the digital divide?

The digital divide refers to the inequitable access to digital resources, including phones, laptops and the internet.



1 in 4 Australians (6.4 million Australians) are digitally excluded.⁷



New research conducted by Good360 Australia shows almost 2 in 5 (39%) parents of school-aged children are concerned about affording essential education items for their children returning to school in 2025.¹



Digital tools such as laptops and reliable internet access are the most significant affordability concern for nearly 1 in 3 families (30%), followed closely by uniforms and school shoes (29%), and books, stationery and backpacks (21%).¹



Only 48% of parents report having reliable internet access at home for their child's educational needs, while just 40% say their children have regular access to a laptop or computer for schoolwork.¹



46% of everyday Australians say that the rising cost of living has affected their ability to get online.³



There is an ongoing need for digital devices among vulnerable communities. Over 19,000 devices have been requested by Good360 Australia's charity and disadvantaged school members since we launched our digital divide program.⁹

Introduction

Everyone deserves digital access in an age of digital connection to unlock opportunities and improve well-being.

The digital divide is a lesser-known but significant part of living in financial hardship. It affects people at all stages of life, from students trying to keep up with schoolwork to adults searching for jobs. Many might not realise how deeply this lack of digital access impacts education, employment, and social connection. For families already struggling with essential needs, finding money for devices, internet access, or digital training can be impossible.

The digital divide is the lack of access to digital resources due to financial hardship.

When people miss out on digital access, it reduces their ability to fully participate in an increasingly online society. The effects can be isolating, leaving individuals feeling excluded, disconnected and struggling to keep up in a world that relies on technology.

What does this look like? It could mean a student falling behind in school because they don't have a laptop, a parent unable to apply for jobs online, or a family missing out on staying connected with loved ones and important services. These barriers can have long-term impacts on education, job prospects, and social inclusion.

The digital divide means vulnerable communities are missing out on digital essentials:

- › Laptops
- › Tablets
- › Phones
- › SIM cards
- › Broadband internet

The cost of these items can place a significant financial strain on families, with 43% of parents of school-age children reporting that digital tools have become a major burden. For many, these challenges mean sacrificing other essential household items, with more than 1 in 5 families (22%) reporting they have had to forgo other necessities to cover education essentials. Alarmingly, nearly 1 in 8 parents (12%) have turned to credit cards or loans to pay for essential education items.¹

Good360 Australia is bringing together national research and stories from our charity and school network to highlight the scope of the digital divide in Australia. Our findings reveal the reality that many Australians face and point to the collective steps we can take to ensure everyone has access to the opportunities that digital connection provides.

Addressing the digital divide is about more than just providing technology - it's about breaking down barriers to education, employment, and social connection. By bridging the gap, we can help build a future where all Australians, regardless of their circumstances, have the tools they need to learn, work, and stay connected.

"As the cost of living crisis continues, our research shows parents are making difficult sacrifices to support their children's learning. Nobody should be forced to choose between essentials for their child's education and basic family necessities such as food and clothing."

Alison Covington AM, Founder and Managing Director of Good360 Australia



Digital divide is the *lack* of access to *basic digital skills* and the tools to participate in today's world.

Nearly 2 in 5 parents of school-aged children (38%) are *more concerned* in 2025 about *affording essential school* items than in previous years.¹



The importance of digital access

Having access to digital tools can open up a world of opportunities for families and children, meaning a lack of access can create significant barriers to education, employment, and even health.

For kids, digital access means a chance to learn, grow, and participate in school. The internet provides a wealth of educational resources, helping students of all ages build skills and expand their knowledge. Yet, in our survey of parents of school-aged children, only **40% said their children have regular access to a laptop or computer for schoolwork and just 48% report having reliable internet access at home for their child's educational needs.**¹

Without these essential tools, children can struggle to complete homework or participate fully in their education, with **10% of parents reporting it has already impacted their child's learning.**¹

This has the same effect on adults, who may not only be seeking education, but employment as well. Many jobs now require at least basic digital literacy, and online job platforms are a key way to find work.⁸ However, a lack of digital access often stems from economic disadvantage, which can limit a families' ability to improve their circumstances.

Beyond education and employment, digital access keeps families connected and supported. Social media and mobile data help loved ones stay in touch, reducing loneliness and isolation. Telehealth services make it easier to access critical health support, especially in rural and remote areas.

Government services and civic participation have also moved online, making digital inclusion essential for a fairer, more connected society.²

But the reality is stark: rising costs mean many Australians are missing out. Forty-six percent of Australians surveyed by the Good Things Foundation say that the rising cost of living has affected their ability to get online.³ For some families, this financial strain causes stress, impacts children's wellbeing, and widens the gap of disadvantage.

As times get tougher, supporting digital access is more important than ever to make sure that everyone has the essentials to stay connected and socially included.

"We are grateful to Good360 for supporting the students from such a remote community. The provision of laptops and internet access is something these students could only dream of back home, and they will certainly treasure this opportunity.

To complement the laptops we received, Optus has generously gifted the students Internet Dongles, and they are looking forward to using the Internet at home. One of our students hopes to leave some of the laptops and internet Dongles at the Rec Hall so that the whole community can benefit from them. Once again, thank you Good360 and Optus for your generous support."

Unity College

Only 40% of parents say their children have *regular access* to a laptop or computer *for schoolwork.*¹



Who is going without?

People with low levels of income, education and employment, communities in some regional areas, people aged over 65 and people with a disability are at particular risk of being left behind, potentially worsening the experiences of people living in poverty and resulting in greater inequality.²

As housing and food costs continue to rise, items like laptops, tablets, and reliable internet are becoming out of reach for many families already under financial strain. For nearly 1.16 million young Australians, the cost of these essential digital tools has been a major barrier, preventing children from accessing education and families from staying connected⁶. Students at schools with a socioeconomic disadvantage are also more likely to experience digital exclusion due to barriers of access and affordability.⁸

Our research also reveals that parent of upper secondary students (16–18 years old) are more likely to say the cost of digital tools like laptops and internet access has been a significant financial burden for the household (50% vs 43% average). They are also more likely to say they have had to sacrifice other essentials to afford education-related items (26% vs 22% average).¹

Providing access to essential digital resources is crucial for vulnerable families to ensure their children can keep up with their education and maintain their wellbeing. This is why we're calling on businesses to step up and donate digital devices and connectivity solutions, so charities can distribute them to meet the growing demand.

"Thank you for the beyond generous donation of Chromebook laptops, Huawei dongles and Optus SIM cards. We have been able to give families in need technology that they have never been able to afford to own. We have also been able to teach basic computing skills and then give them the devices and internet access so they can continue to learn and grow at home. Our families and students who received them were beyond grateful for this generous gift. Many families struggle to put food on the table so technology is usually just a dream for them. This is a dream that you have made come true. Thank you Good360!"

Salisbury Primary School

Parents of 16-18 year olds are *more likely* to say the cost of digital tools has a significant burden for the household



When asking parents about their experiences affording digital devices for their children, we found:



1 in 10 parents (10%) say difficulty affording education items has impacted their child's participation in education.¹



1 in 5 parents (22%) say their family has had to sacrifice other essentials to afford education related items and expenses.¹

The impact of being disconnected

Without access to digital technology, people risk feeling disconnected, falling behind in education or work, and losing confidence in their ability to keep up with the modern world. This can also lead to serious disadvantages, including limited opportunities to learn, work and connect with others.

For kids and teens, not having a reliable device or internet access impacts their ability to complete schoolwork, build digital skills, and prepare for the future. In a survey by WorkVentures of recipient students of digital devices, **84% of recipients reported they struggled to finish classwork and assignments without access to a computer.** Rising costs also means families are cutting back on digital devices and internet plans⁵, leaving many students with outdated equipment or no access at all.⁶ This lack of resources directly affects educational outcomes and their ability to reach their full potential.

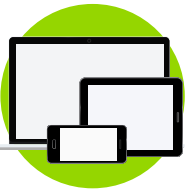
For adults, the digital divide has far-reaching effects, from limiting access to essential services and employment opportunities to reinforcing social and economic disadvantages. A lack of digital skills or tools compounds these challenges, making it harder to break free from cycles of disadvantage.⁴

With 1 in 4 Australians being digitally excluded, the need to bridge the digital divide is urgent. Ensuring everyone has access to technology creates opportunities, builds confidence, and fosters more connected and inclusive communities.

Donate to Good360 to ensure digital access for people in need.



\$150 will provide a refurbished laptop, dongle and one year of data to a person in need.



Make the pledge to donate your devices at <https://good360.org.au/digital-divide/donor-pledge/>

The National Device Bank (NDB) working to solve the issue

In 2024, we began laying the foundation for the National Device Bank (NDB), an innovative initiative in partnership with WorkVentures and Good Things Australia. The NDB is designed to tackle the digital divide by providing refurbished and donated devices, along with data and training where needed, to Australians who need them most.

Rather than being recycled, sent to landfill, or sold overseas, the millions of devices refreshed each year by businesses and government agencies can be redirected to create a positive impact

- empowering Australians with access to the technology they need to connect, learn, and thrive.

The National Device Bank encourages companies and government organisations to donate surplus laptops, tablets, and mobile phones. These devices are refurbished locally, ensuring they stay in Australia to support communities in need. This initiative is a step forward in bridging the digital divide, reducing e-waste, and extending the life of technology to create a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Getting devices into communities

Good360's charity and disadvantaged school member network plays an important role in bridging the digital divide. They provide access to digital essentials to help meet immediate needs and often act as a gateway to wider support. **In 2024 alone, our members have helped us connect over \$1 million worth of digital devices to communities in need.**

"We are thrilled to provide 10 refurbished devices to our clients for education. Our clients have lived a life of control and are very excited but nervous to begin their journey of further education. As with most things these days, their courses involve online learning components due to the fear of leaving their homes. To be able to use these devices for further education, to be independent is absolutely amazing."

Women's Safety Services, SA

Donors already doing their part

Special thank you to our generous product donors, whose kindness has meant vulnerable communities can access much-needed digital essentials, providing digital access and connection.



What can be done?

The digital divide affects 1 in 4 Australians, limiting access to vital digital tools like laptops, phones, and reliable internet, particularly among vulnerable communities. To help bridge this gap, Good360 Australia is calling for action. Retailers, manufacturers, and businesses can donate digital devices like laptops and tablets, ensuring they reach people in need rather than going to waste. Charities and disadvantaged schools can join Good360's network to access these essential

digital products for their communities. Financial donations can also support Good360's efforts to connect Australians with the tools they need to participate in education, employment, and social connection. Together, we can break down the barriers created by digital exclusion and ensure everyone has access to the opportunities digital inclusion provides. By supporting digital access, we help build a fairer, more connected society for all.

We can all play a role in bridging the digital divide in Australia:



Donate digital devices and other education essentials

Retailers, manufacturers and brands with products to donate can contact Good360 Australia. For digital devices email Mike Tozer at mike@good360.org.au and for all other donations such as new education supplies, contact corporatepartnerships@good360.org.au



Join our network to access education products

Charities and disadvantaged schools can join our network for free to access education products (and more) to support local communities. Register at: <https://good360.org.au/get-the-goods/>






Donate money

Help support getting education goods into the hands of people who need them, because everyone deserves education and digital access. Donate today via: <https://give.good360.org.au/digital-divide>



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A note from our Founder and Managing Director



“As the cost of living crisis continues, our research shows parents are making difficult sacrifices to support their children’s learning. Nobody should be forced to choose between essentials for their child’s education and basic family necessities such as food and clothing.

Demand for essential digital tools like laptops and reliable internet access is surging as the cost-of-living crisis continues to impact Australian households. Governments and businesses must step up through funding, donations, or partnerships – to ensure families can access the resources they need for their children’s education.

We’re incredibly grateful for the support Good360 has received so far. In 2024 alone, we connected over \$1 million worth of digital devices to communities in need, but we need to double the number of donors to address the growing need in our community. By redirecting surplus devices, we can help bridge the digital divide while also reducing waste. Businesses and retailers have a huge opportunity to support students’ education, bridge education inequality and improve sustainability,”

Alison Covington AM,
Good360 Australia Founder & MD

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About Good360 Australia:

Good360 Australia is the largest digital marketplace in Australia for the retail industry to donate unused and unsold consumer goods to people in need. Good360 is a connector – we distribute millions of new, unsold consumer goods like clothes, homewares, computers, appliances, furniture, toiletries and toys that have been donated by over 600 partners, to a network of over 4,700 charities and disadvantaged schools across Australia supporting people in need. The result is a Circle of Good that reduces need and waste in our communities, helping both people and our planet.



Be part of the Circle of Good.

For more information visit www.good360.org.au
or follow us @good360au

