



Participation & Information

#CovidUnder19: Life Under Coronavirus is an initiative to meaningfully involve children in responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. 26,258 children from 137 countries across all five UN regions responded to our survey. More detail on this can be found at the end of this paper. This briefing presents findings that relate to children's right to participation and information.



UNCRC ARTICLE 12

Articles 12 of the UNCRC ensures children's right to **express their views** freely, and to have their views be accounted for and **listened to by authorities**.

While **35%** didn't know if children were being listened to by the government, another **38%** considered that they were not heard when making decisions about the COVID-19 crisis.

'A country is not only made up of adults, we children exist and should be heard as well.' (Girl 14, Costa Rica)



BEING HEARD BY THE GOVERNMENT

Only 20% of children considered that the government listens to them when making policy decisions.

Children in **residential homes** were the most positive about government responding to children (**37%**). While children with **disabilities** (**48%**) and those identifying as **LGBTQ+** (**51%**) were most critical.

They are concerned with the government **violating their participation rights** and not receiving **respect as citizens**.

'people my age continue to be ignored by our government. You refuse to respect us now, but expect us to respect you' (Girl 14, USA.)



IMAGINE YOU COULD TALK TO GOVERNMENT...

Many children asked their governments to take children's voices more seriously:

'They have to feel, speak, think and hear like a child to take the right decisions for children... In order to protect our rights, our voices have to be heard and taken seriously. Make our voice your choice.' (Girl 17, Pakistan)

'Take young people's opinion into consideration, because they are also a part of the community and they should have the right to express themselves.' (Boy 17, Lebanon).

'We should be allowed to voice our opinions on when schools should reopen. It is our future so it should be our choice' (Girl, 15, South Africa)



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UNCRC ARTICLE 17

Article 17 recognises the importance that access to **diverse and reliable information** has for children's life and well-being.

It ensures that children must have **access to mass media**, and to national and international data sources to promote their development.

The most urgent issue in this respect is the **radically unequal access to internet** among differently positioned children.

'Seeing that I live in a rural community where it is hard to access internet.. It is a challenge to learn online' (Girl 14, Zambia)

INTERNET ACCESS

While only **13%** of all children said that they had **hardly any or no access** to internet, and more than half (**55%**) had regular access, certain sections are disproportionately lacking access to basic internet sources.

62% of children in **detention centres, refugee camps and homeless centres** said they had no access or hardly any access to internet.

Children identifying as **migrants** and **asylum seekers** have also significantly lower access (**38%** and **27%** respectively).

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Family members (**62%**) and traditional news outlets (**59%**) are the preferred sources of information on the coronavirus.

Children showed scepticism to information given by **friends** or in **social media**; **83% and 75%** (respectively) of children said they didn't use these sources.

Using and sharing **reliable info on social media** and creating **child-friendly sources of information** were important concerns:

'I admire how Jacinda Arde[r]n made sure to specifically address the children and make a point to try to reassure them that the Easter bunny is an essential worker. I think the best way to do that would be to hold a press conference where she would answer questions from children.' (Girl 13, USA).

'Using social media, I have been able to learn lots more about politics, privilege and world issues which I have not previously considered.' (Girl 17, England)





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Initiative Partners



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All children have rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). #CovidUnder19 is a multi-stakeholder initiative that brings together children, civil society organisations, academia and other partners to work together in understanding children's experiences of their rights during the COVID19 pandemic. A goal of #CovidUnder19 is to create a space for children across the globe to be meaningfully involved in the discussions around issues triggered by the COVID19 pandemic and contribute towards shaping the post-COVID19 world.

On 28 May 2020, the initiative launched a global consultation survey to understand children's experiences of their rights under the coronavirus pandemic and their views on how their rights could be better realised. The survey applied the Centre for Children's Rights' innovative approach to rights-based research directly involving children and young people as advisors from the outset. The survey has been designed by child rights experts and 270 children from 26 countries. The survey was open until 31 July 2020. It was made available in 27 languages as well as an Easy Read version for children and young people with intellectual disabilities.

Children and young people contributed to data analysis and interpretation. Each thematic paper presents key findings. Data is disaggregated as far as possible and where findings are significant. Please note that the survey is not intended to be representative of the global child population. Findings are presented on a global basis.

For more information please contact covidunder19@gmail.com

The Centre for Children's Rights at Queen's University Belfast designed and conducted the survey and developed the thematic briefings in collaboration with Initiative partners and a team of child advisors. This was supported by an ESRC Impact Acceleration Account award through Queen's University Belfast