Income poor, ICT poor?
A survey study on ICT access and difficulties of Flemish income poor people

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Income poor people are disadvantaged by the abolishment of physical services and counters.
Digital divide/inequality research

stratification hypothesis vs. normalization hypothesis
In Belgium...

3-10% lacks ICT access at home

10-20% lacks ICT-skills

These percentages are significant higher among low income people

Percentage among low income people...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-10%</td>
<td>Lacks ICT access at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20%</td>
<td>Lacks ICT-skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>20-40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-40%</td>
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Our conclusion may seem not surprising...

however, the absence of figures...

may result in detrimental policy decisions.
De samenleving digitaliseert in snel tempo. Veel burgers worden geconfronteerd met deze digitaliserende maatschappij. Nu de Vlaamse overheid zichzelf als doel stelt om tegen 2020 alle administratieve transacties tussen overheid en burgers of lokale besturen en ondernemingen via digitale kanalen aan te bieden, met een maximale benadering vanuit een virtueel en digitaal loket, zijn serieuze inspanningen nodig om alle burgers op de kar te krijgen.

**Diversiteit in burgers, diversiteit in aanpak**

Bij alle processen van digitalisering moet rekening worden gehouden met de manier waarop verschillende burgers met digitale toepassingen omgaan. Elke burger is anders en heeft andere motieven om gebruik te maken van digitale dienstverlening. Sommigen vinden heel snel hun weg in het digitale landschap, andere doelgroepen ontbreekt het aan toegang, vaardigheden, motivatie, vertrouwen en een sociaal netwerk dat hen ondersteunt. Zij hebben hulp nodig om mee te kunnen in de online samenleving.

De Vlaamse overheid wil de toegankelijkheid van de nieuwe digitale diensten voor alle burgers nastreven.
People are considered as poor when they have a monthly OECD equivalent income $\leq €1250$
**Poor people**  
$n = 58$

- Age range = 18-64
- Age mean = 47.2
- Age SD = 11.5
- 58.6% men
- 19.0% employed
- 50.0% has disability or health problem
- 41.4% migration background

**Non-poor people**  
$n = 569$

- Age range = 18-64
- Age mean = 39.6
- Age SD = 13.2
- 48.7% men
- 78.2% employed
- 23.2% has disability or health problem
- 8.6% migration background
Results

Do you have a desktop, laptop or tablet at home?

Yes: 97.7% (Income non-poor - n = 569)
Yes: 53.4% (Income poor - n = 58)

No, because I cannot afford it: 20.7% (Income non-poor - n = 569)
No, because I cannot afford it: 2.1% (Income poor - n = 58)

No, because I do not want or need it: 25.8% (Income non-poor - n = 569)
No, because I do not want or need it: 0.2% (Income poor - n = 58)

No, because I do not want or need it: 0.0% (Income non-poor - n = 569)
No, because I do not want or need it: 0.0% (Income poor - n = 58)

0.0% 20.0% 40.0% 60.0% 80.0% 100.0%
Do you have an internet connection at home?

- Yes: 72.4% (Income poor - n = 58, Income non-poor - n = 569)
- No, because I cannot afford it: 15.5%
- No, because I do not want or need it: 12.0%

No, because I do not want or need it: 0.2%
Do you have a smartphone?

- Yes: 82.8% (Income poor - n = 58, Income non-poor - n = 569)
- No, because I cannot afford it: 3.4% (Income poor - n = 58, Income non-poor - n = 569)
- No, because I do not want or need it: 13.7% (Income poor - n = 58, Income non-poor - n = 569)
- No, because I do not want or need it: 7.2% (Income poor - n = 58, Income non-poor - n = 569)
Percentage respondents who have (rather) difficulties...

- to search for job vacancies online: 37.9% (37.9%), 8.4% (8.4%)
- to register as a jobseeker with the government online (e.g. create VDAB profile): 41.4% (41.4%), 12.0% (12.0%)
- to apply for jobs online (e.g. uploading a cv): 37.9% (37.9%), 10.2% (10.2%)

Income poor - n = 58
Income non-poor - n = 569

- to apply for jobs online (e.g. uploading a cv)
Percentage respondents who have (rather) difficulties...

- to claim a benefit from the government online (e.g. for unemployment)
  - Income poor - n = 58: 17.8%
  - Income non-poor - n = 569: 41.4%

- to apply for a premium from the government online (e.g. for housing refurbishment)
  - Income poor - n = 58: 21.1%
  - Income non-poor - n = 569: 43.1%
to find information on electricity, gaz or water online

to find information about health, fire or family insurances online

to find information about the assistance of social organizations online

Percentage respondents who have (rather) difficulties...

- Income poor - n = 58
- Income non-poor - n = 569
Limitations

- Convenience sampling strategy
- Self-report measures
- Presence of researcher when questioning income poor people
- Sample size of income poor people
Conclusion

• A significant amount of income poor people lack ICT access at home (by financial constraint)

• 30-40% of income poor people have difficulties to use the internet for basic needs, compared to 10-15% of income non-poor people
Implications

- **Subsidy system for internet connection at home**
- **ICT devices at a social rate** to income poor people and families
- **Minimum of non-digital services and administrations**
Thank you for your attendance!
Want to know more about our research?

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References

Anrijs, S., Ponnet, K., & De Marez, L. (2020). Development and psychometric properties of the Digital Difficulties Scale (DDS): An instrument to measure who is disadvantaged to fulfill basic needs by experiencing difficulties in using a smartphone or computer. *PLOS ONE, 15*(5), e0233891. [https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0233891](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0233891)


