

DIGITAL EQUITY EVOLUTION

Early research on digital divides and inclusion focused on people having the necessary access via infrastructure and devices for Internet access, and the skills or training to use the technologies. In Aotearoa the access element is conceived as having three facets - connectivity, affordability, and accessibility (Department of Internal Affairs, 2019) and was the focus of much of the public investment in the 2000's

In the last decade, digital equity has become important to assure everyone has equal opportunity to participate in a digital society and economy, on their own terms. This means, digital equity is about inclusivity and equity. This is critical as technology plays an increasingly important role and alternative access channels are limited or absent. Digital equity allows people to access education and training, find jobs, start businesses, and participate in civic life in ways that makes sense for their circumstances.

As digital equity becomes embedded, we can expect to see digital justice emerge as the outcome of digital equity and digital inclusion being successful, we will see systemic change that will support fair and equitable access to digital technologies, people acquiring necessary skills, and accessing opportunities to fully participate and benefit from digital and online opportunities in ways that is relevant to them and their communities.

“ [I have] Chronic and really severe health issues, housebound, virtually and living on the supported lifestyle benefit, I just can not afford a normal broadband connection. And I need to be able to reach out to doctors. I would keep in contact was my medical center and pharmacy laboratory really easy for me to order meds and have them delivered, and it's all fine, and keep in contact with the hospital.

Extract from Joe's narrative.



For this poster we draw on extracts of Joe's narrative. Joe was a participant in a larger study that explored how sustainable the digital inclusion initiative called Skinny Jump*

Joe's narrative shows just how important connections and participation through digital equity is. Beyond the everyday, Joe is able to take an active role in his care. He uses digital platforms getting medications but he also uses them to educate the medical profession about his illness.



Well, even now [my life is] isolated... That's the one thing that I actually seem to look forward to, because it's my way of giving back and teaching here young doctors about my medical condition because doctors go their whole working career without either seeing it. And they don't understand that they actually have to look it up in a medical dictionary. They just don't see it. So, it's my way of giving back to the community. Doing that sort of thing. It makes my life worthwhile.

Extract from Joe's narrative.



*Skinny Jump is a pre-pay internet-at-home system. It is flexible prepaid broadband and is designed to help more New Zealanders gain access to affordable broadband at home through the provision of heavily subsidised connectivity to households at risk of being digitally excluded due to cost. Disability, was a key criteria to obtain a Skinny Jump modem.



For more research from the Digital Participation Lab please scan



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