

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND:

A TOOLKIT FOR SUPPORTING MARGINALIZED STUDENTS DURING CRISES AND EMERGENCIES

The Office for Inclusivity and Change (OIC) has developed a toolkit that shines a light on the needs of vulnerable students during the Covid-19 crisis. Relying on data from the UCT access survey, relevant Stats SA reports and conversations with students and staff, the OIC explores how race, gender, disability and nationality play a role in access to resources important for teaching and learning. Inequality is real, and these infographics share the holistic challenges faced by students and staff in education, their homes and communities.

The infographics are simple and limited reflections on the complex ways race, gender and disability affect access and enjoyment of education. While the infographics only show part of the bigger picture, they highlight where power disparities can occur and share ideas on how we can remedy these disparities. Educators will find the infographics useful when thinking through concerns about access and quick decisions need to be made about the academic programme. We suggest using the infographics as a springboard for conversations on how we can work together to make sure no one is left behind.

Can you find the five hidden Covid-19 icons in the infographic?

Inequality is experienced in an intersectional way. For example, a woman of colour can concurrently experience multiple forms of unfair discrimination, based on her race, gender and sexual orientation.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF CRISES AND EMERGENCIES ON TEACHING, LEARNING AND RESEARCH



Crisis and emergency situations exacerbate inequalities and lead to heightened emotions.

1 INEQUALITY

During crisis and emergency situations vulnerabilities and inequalities are exacerbated



Military and police violence have been documented with poor, black and township dwelling persons being most affected. Poor and unemployed persons and those who are employed through informal and casual work are facing dire economic consequences. Further, during the lockdown there has been a surge of reports of GBV through national hotlines, with anecdotal reports of survivors stuck at home with abusers.

3 TEACHING, LEARNING AND RESEARCH



Even outside of a crisis or emergency, access to and experience of education is related to race, class, gender, sexuality, disability and nationality among other factors

2 EMOTION



Crisis and emergency situations are traumatic, difficult and effect our psychological state

Fear and anxiety, among other emotions are foregrounded during a crisis. Individuals are scared about their own survival and are worried about the health and survival of their family members.

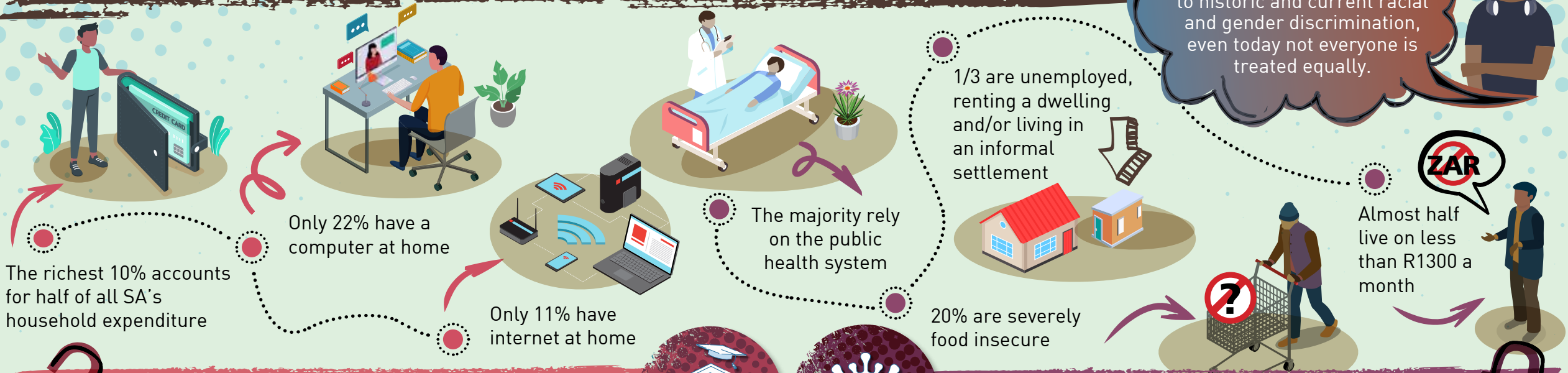
This series of infographics highlights power disparities in and beyond education in South Africa and will share ideas on how we can overcome the current crisis.



Our identities and access to safety nets impacts our experience. A young gay coloured man from a low-income neighbourhood will face challenges that an affluent heterosexual white woman may not.

THE SPECTRUM OF INEQUALITY IN SA

Race and gender are lenses we can use to understand inequality. Due to historic and current racial and gender discrimination, even today not everyone is treated equally.



The richest 10% accounts for half of all SA's household expenditure

Only 22% have a computer at home

Only 11% have internet at home

The majority rely on the public health system

1/3 are unemployed, renting a dwelling and/or living in an informal settlement

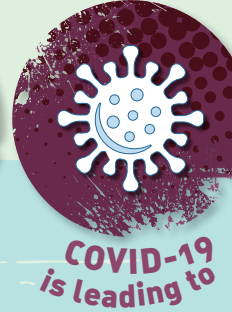
20% are severely food insecure

Almost half live on less than R1300 a month

MORE ACCESS



UNIVERSITIES are providing



COVID-19 is leading to

LESS ACCESS

- Loss of income and employment
- Police and military violence
- Gender-based and domestic violence
- Increase in unpaid care work

MORE ACCESS IS AVAILABLE TO: men, cisgender and heterosexual persons, White and Indian persons and able-bodied persons.

- Access to entry-level laptops
- Telephonic support
- Access to 30GB data (10GB peak and 20GB off-peak)

LESS ACCESS IS AVAILABLE TO: womxn, gender and sexually diverse persons, trans persons, Black and Coloured persons, persons with disabilities and foreign nationals.

Crisis situations exacerbate existing inequalities in education. While a classroom, to a small extent, levels our experience of education, learning from our homes amplifies power disparities.

Content by Gabriel Hqosain Khan and Lesego Modtse.
Design by Teresa Jeffcote (STATS SA, 2019)



ACCESS TO DEVICES

Asian, Coloured, Indian and White students are most likely to have access to laptops, smartphones and tablets

Asian, Indian and White students are least likely to have to share their devices in their household

Race, gender and nationality play a role in our ability to access a device and its features.

Of all demographic groups Black men and women were least likely to own a laptop and most likely to share their device in the household

The story is far more complicated than this spectrum. For example, an international student from the Democratic Republic of Congo has a different experience to one from Sweden.

International students are least likely to own a smartphone

Black students with disabilities face challenges accessing laptops and assistive devices

MORE ACCESS

LESS ACCESS

EXPERIENCES

- At home, persons with disabilities have limited access to assistive devices, such as screen readers or laptops with the required capabilities.
- International students in South Africa during the lockdown may be living in environments not conducive to study or are in home countries with regular power-cuts.
- Even if students/staff have received a loan laptop there may be an expectation to share the laptop with family members and this laptop may not have the features of an expensive one.

REFLECTIONS

- Support access to relevant assistive devices for students with disabilities by connecting with Disability Services and following recommendations.
- Understand the challenges students are facing including power-cuts, sharing devices or safety concerns.
- Consider adapting course work and research, based on the capabilities of simple devices and possible interruptions.
- Acknowledge student apprehension about loan laptops including safety concerns, possibility of damage or theft, and assist where possible.
- Encourage students and staff to connect with community libraries when they reopen as safe spaces to study and work.
- Offer emergency accommodation to vulnerable students and allow for vulnerable students to return to campus first.

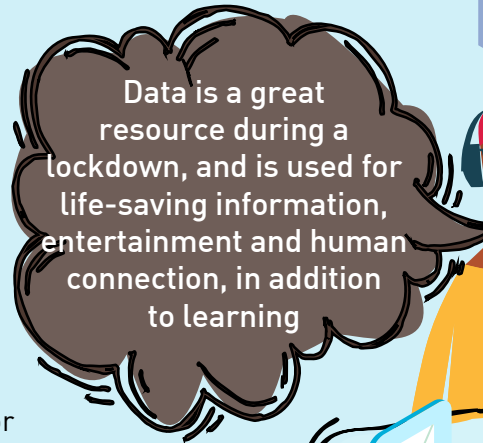
ACCESS TO INTERNET



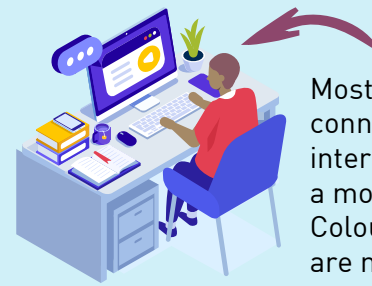
Almost every Asian, Indian and White student has access to the internet



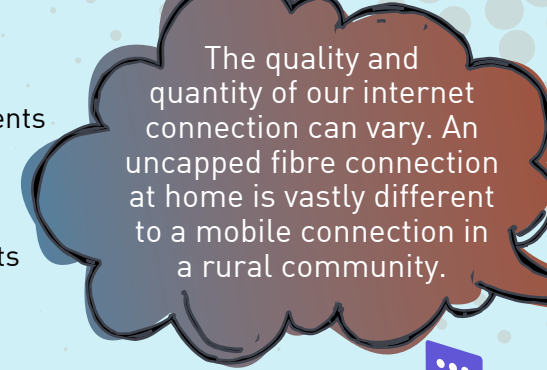
Asian, Indian and White students use either wifi or mobile to access the internet



Data is a great resource during a lockdown, and is used for life-saving information, entertainment and human connection, in addition to learning



Most Black students connect to the internet using a mobile while Coloured students are more likely to use wifi



The quality and quantity of our internet connection can vary. An uncapped fibre connection at home is vastly different to a mobile connection in a rural community.



Persons living with disabilities also faced challenges accessing the internet



Of all groups Black students were least likely to have access to the internet, with Coloured students also facing challenges

MORE ACCESS

LESS ACCESS

EXPERIENCES

- While universities have enabled access to data for students, much of the data are night-time bundles available between 00:00-05:00.
- During the lockdown data is a huge resource. If a student has data, they may share some with family members or use it for entertainment.
- The internet connects us during this time, but it is also isolating. The buffering, loading, and limited physical contact reminds us that we're socially distant.
- The pressure to be online constantly is overwhelming. Through one device: lecturers, friends and news sites all lobby for attention.
- Having data doesn't mean the quality of our connection improves, we may need to walk a distance to get a decent signal.



REFLECTIONS

- We need to acknowledge the holistic data needs of students and staff. Let's continue lobbying mobile networks to provide more and affordable data for learning and life.
- Online communication can be overwhelming and distracting, fewer and strategic communications would be welcomed. For example, share a PowerPoint slide or weekly plan with hyperlinks for each lesson.
- Not everyone has a smartphone, let's activate our social networks to donate/give smartphones to students who can't afford one and need it for learning and connecting socially.
- Those who have access to WIFI or can afford data should be able to donate their data to students in need.

TIME PREFERENCES

Students who are men are allocated less care work, giving them more time to study

Asian and White students were able to set aside more time to study

Black, Coloured and Indian students were able to set aside less time to study

Gender, culture and disability play a role in our ability to allocate time to work and study

While gender roles are shifting, women are still expected to take on more care responsibilities than men. These harmful gender norms pressure gender non-conforming youth to fit into cisnormativity.

Students who are women are allocated more care work, giving them less time for study

MORE TIME

LESS TIME

EXPERIENCES

- In homes with young children or those being homeschooled, staff and students lose time through sharing devices or providing learning support.
- There is an increase in unpaid labour and care work including running errands, preparing food and taking care of sick relatives.
- Persons with disabilities may take more time than usual to participate in the academic programme due to limited access to assistive devices.
- Slow internet or devices, due to age or memory, could lead to easy tasks taking up more time.

REFLECTIONS

- Acknowledge that the current situation will affect the time of staff and students in different ways. Hear their challenges and work to create reasonable alternatives in line with their current condition.
- Understand how gender, culture and disability play a role in the way time is allocated and activities are prioritized during a crisis or emergency.
- Recognise the benefits of asynchronous or recorded content which students can engage with in their own time in addition to live lectures or strictly timebound assignments.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Access to multiple devices, fast internet and a quiet learning space is a privilege

Be aware of how disparate access to resources and tools might privilege or scaffold some groups to succeed

Access to devices, the internet and time preferences play a role in who engages and how

Access to simple devices, sharing devices, limited data and shared home spaces can be a barrier

Some of the useful online tools we rely on for video and voice calls are not as easily accessible to persons with disabilities. For example, it may be difficult to include a Sign Language interpreter.

Be aware of how race, gender, class and disability play a role in participation in online activities

EXPERIENCES

- Students are living in conditions not conducive to study. For example, living in overcrowded households, rural communities with rudimentary access to water and sanitation, or spaces that are violent.
- The requirement to meet deadlines may be challenged by the expectation to support parents and take on household responsibilities.
- The use of self-study puts a lot of pressure on students who may be unfamiliar with this approach.
- Our ability to study may be influenced by the stress and trauma we experience in home environments.
- There is a heavy evidentiary burden on students/staff to prove they're struggling with their mental health. For example, how can we prove we couldn't get out of bed or we didn't have money to buy electricity.

REFLECTIONS

- Try offering content in different mediums (audio, visual, text, etc.) to support students who learn in different ways and possibly persons with disability as well.
- Offer short online lectures with a brief summary of the content, a downloadable presentation and a transcript.
- Foreground compassion and care in teaching, learning and workspaces. By creating spaces for authentic human connection and reducing evidentiary burden for mental health during this isolating time.
- Listen to the needs and experiences of students and staff and be flexible around deadlines. We all have different experiences of this crisis and we adapt differently to our circumstances.

TASKS WE CAN DO

Most students can participate in basic online learning including voice calls

Making content available in various formats including, videos, presentations and text summaries is a good way to ensure no one is left behind

Of all demographic groups Black, Coloured and international students, men more so than women face challenges with online learning

If a lecturer uses video content only, students with limited access to the internet or rudimentary devices may not be able to engage with the content

One third of students struggle to download a lecture video, participate in a live lecture or play a lecture video online

NO WIFI??

EASY TO DO

DIFFICULT TO DO

EXPERIENCES

- Different people have different learning styles, some are audio-visual learners whilst others might prefer text. Regardless of learning styles limited access to resources is the biggest barrier.
- Some disciplines may be more comfortable with digital approaches than others. In some cases, self-study and online forums may work but in others these are less effective.
- Online lectures can offer content in a very uniform and one-dimensional manner. This may demotivate some students.
- Hard of hearing students rely on lipreading which is difficult to do on a video lecture.

REFLECTIONS

- If using video, make sure the video is angled towards the presenter's lips for lipreading and use closed captions.
- Using video is great but many students will struggle to access this content. Offer content of the same quality in other formats to enable participation from different persons.
- Where students are unable to engage with online video content, try to courier or send printed content, a USB flash drive or micro SD card with content preloaded to students.
- Use a platform students and staff are already familiar with like Facebook and WhatsApp to encourage participation.
- Prioritize in person classes and support sessions for vulnerable students when return to campus is possible.

RETURNING TO CAMPUS

Returning to campus can enable vulnerable groups to access resources to continue their education

Asthma, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and hypertension are common health challenges for many South Africans

Many South Africans rely on public health facilities and live in high-density neighbourhoods where Covid-19 can quickly spread. This means health facilities can be easily overwhelmed.

NO MEDICAL COVER

75% of South Africans, mostly Black and Coloured persons, rely on public health facilities
Cape Town is the epicenter of the virus

Returning to campus is positive news for students and staff struggling with remote teaching and learning. We'll need to collectively mitigate the effects of Covid-19 on campus.

EXPERIENCES

REFLECTIONS

- In winter many people develop flu-like symptoms. This could lead to false-alarms raised or real cases missed.
- While many students are young and healthy, some might have chronic health conditions.
- Staff members may be older, and may have existing health challenges.
- Physical distancing on campus removes positive social elements from campus life and may create a culture of loneliness and isolation. Physical spacing in classrooms and residences will make people feel disconnected.
- Cape Town is the epicenter of the virus, a return to campus poses a risk to students and staff.
- If students and staff are off campus using public transport could pose a risk.

- Encourage older persons and those with existing health conditions to continue to self-isolate.
- It's important to communicate good behaviours (handwashing, mask wearing, etc.) and to provide personal protective equipment.
- It's important to encourage and apply physical distancing in a non-punitive manner. Physical distancing should come with social solidarity for example using online spaces to encourage connections or debriefing before or after a lecture.
- Review and follow the UCT health procedures for when students or staff become unwell or a possible outbreak of Covid-19 on campus.
- Acknowledge the need for flexible attendance, special sick leave and adapted ways students and staff can learn and work. For example, learning remotely from a residence room.
- Connect to the mental health and psychosocial support services available on and off campus.
- Support and assist vulnerable students who would benefit from on campus support and in person learning first.
- If possible, provide transport support to those using public transport to minimize risk factors or encourage use of provided sanitation sites when arriving on campus. Where possible use flexible work hours – to allow public transport users to use the services during off-peak times.

ADAPTING OUR WORK

TO THE DIFFERENT NEEDS AND CAPACITIES OF DIFFERENT GROUPS

LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND:

Start planning from the perspective of those who don't have access and are struggling to participate rather than those who do. Think of online work, teaching and learning from the perspective of simple devices, slow internet and limited time.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE DIFFERENT NEEDS AND CAPACITIES:

Different groups in South Africa have different needs and capacities based on their location, and their ability to access and use resources (devices, data, time, etc.). Acknowledge that race, gender, disability and other factors play a role in our lives and experiences.

ADAPTATION AND FLEXIBILITY:

In order to meet the needs of those who are most left behind, we need to adapt and be flexible. We can adapt teaching offerings and work, for example offering content in different formats and flexible scheduling. Further we could be more flexible, and shift plans to accommodate individuals if requested.

The infographics have highlighted how race, gender and disability play a role during a crisis. How can we work together to make sure no one is left behind?



In addition to learning material, persons with disabilities need assistive devices and human support to succeed at university

We live in a patriarchal world where women are given more responsibilities than men. For example, taking care of children, cooking and supporting parents

We need to acknowledge that in South Africa, access to resources and opportunities is related to race. For Black students to succeed they need resources and support

Even outside of a crisis, foreign nationals face a great deal of xenophobia. During the lockdown international students may have been forced home or may have stayed in SA under precarious condition with limited financial support

