5RIGHTS FOUNDATION

Building the digital world that young people deserve

Children everywhere deserve to be safe online

You can help us achieve this

The digital world is not optional for children. It is where they access education, health services and entertainment, build and maintain their relationships, and engage in civic and social activities. Digital technologies are built into the physical environments children inhabit and the systems that govern their lives, from the bus pass that gets them to school to the algorithms that grade their exam results. Yet the digital world still largely fails to acknowledge children's presence, systematically exposing them to risk and harm. This is a generational injustice.

5Rights has a vision of a digital world that children can access knowledgeably, creatively, and fearlessly. Since 2012, 5Rights has been at the forefront of delivering practical change for children – pioneering research, global policy, enforceable regulation, guidance and technical standards for innovators and designers. We have come a long way, but as technology innovates, so must we. Our vision is that tech should be accountable for children's safety and rights, and with the spread of AI across digital products and services, we must ensure that they are not built to automate the exploitation of our children, especially the most vulnerable.

We need your help to turn the tide and deliver for children. Please become a 5Rights funder, and together we will build the digital world young people deserve.

Baroness Beeban Kidron
Founder & Chair

Leanda Barrington-Leach
Executive Director

The more time you use social media the more addicted you are and there is no control over it.

Ana, 13 years old

We want to be on the internet to learn and to share, but we are not ready for the whole adult world.

Abdel, 9 years old

I didn't know they make data banks about you. Or take your Google search and that's how they know what you like and don't like. I was really shocked when I found all that out.

Sasha, 15 years old
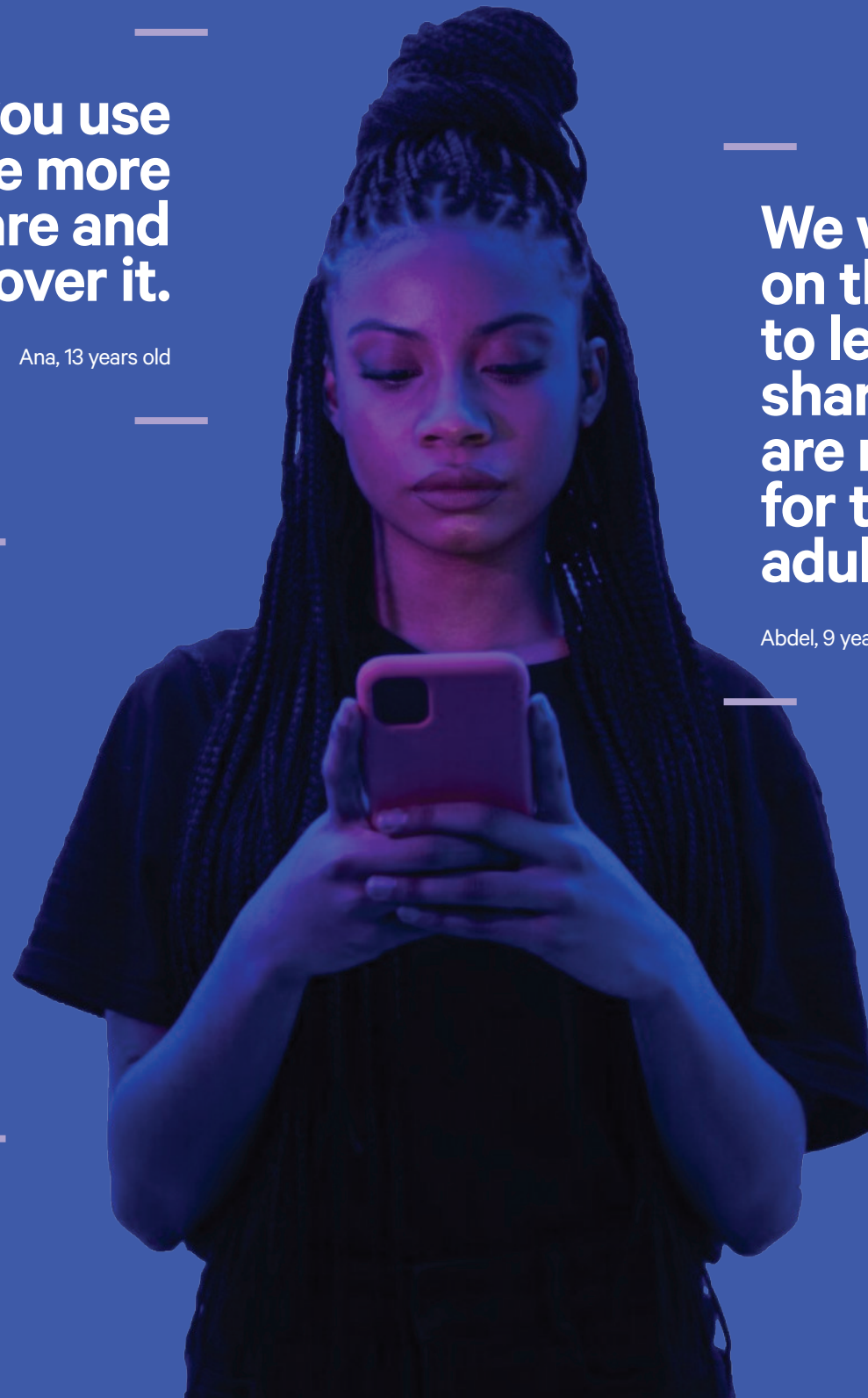
OUR CHALLENGE

The digital world is risky by design, leading children to harm

The digital economy is an attention economy. Most of the services where children spend most of their time are designed not to help them develop and realise their potential, but to keep them sharing and interacting, at any cost. As designers themselves acknowledge, "reducing attention will reduce revenue."[1]

Design features that keep children engaged include: friend recommendation systems; endless scrolls; popularity metrics; gambling-like features; constant nudges and reminders.

Persuasive design increases children's engagement and determines their activities and the decisions they make online, stunting their creativity and development. It also exposes children to a wide variety of risks: exposure to illegal and harmful content – including violent, pornographic, self-harm and eating disorder content – as well as mis- and disinformation; bullying and hate speech; contacts from unknown adults, including predators.[2]

The costs to children are palpable. They include personal anxiety, social aggression, denuded relationships, sleep deprivation and negative impacts on education, health and wellbeing. Rising numbers of children are suffering addiction, depression, eating disorders, attempting suicide, falling prey to sexual exploitation and abuse.[3]

1. 5Rights Foundation, Pathways: How digital design puts children at risk (July 2021)
2. 5Rights Foundation, Risky-by-design interactive microsite of case studies
3. 5Rights Foundation, Disrupted Childhood: The cost of persuasive design (April 2023)

The thought process that went into building these applications was all about: 'How do we consume as much of your time and conscious attention as possible?' God only knows what it's doing to our children's brains.

Sean Parker, *Former Facebook President*

40%

of children say they rarely disconnect from social media and use it constantly throughout the day.

13%

only of children's time online is used for creative activity.

80-90%

of children play video games. In the U.S. boys spend an average of 2 hours 17 minutes per day gaming.

50%

of teenagers say images on social media cause them to worry about their body image.

61%

of children say they often or sometimes feel unsafe online.

50%

of children report communicating with a stranger online.

54%

of young people report having experienced online sexual harms before they were 18 years old.

100%

increase in child suicides rates in Europe and the U.S. since 2010.

80%

of children report wanting to leave a social media platform for wellbeing reasons but feel unable to.

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN GAME-CHANGERS

5Rights played a key role in developing and making the case for the Age Appropriate Design Code in the UK, California and Maryland, which has driven the biggest tech design changes since GDPR. We supported the drafting and adoption of the same standards in the Irish Fundamentals, and have introduced laws in several other US states and countries in Asia, Europe and Latin America.

5Rights successfully campaigned for ground-breaking protections for children in the UK's Online Safety Act, the EU's Digital Services Act, AI Act and draft EU law to combat child sexual abuse, as well as the Council of Europe Convention on AI.

5Rights chaired the Steering Committee for the drafting of General comment No. 25 to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child setting out how children's rights apply and must be enforced in the digital environment. We led a global coalition to secure political support from world governments in a UN General Assembly Resolution.

5Rights led the development and approval of global industry technical standards on Age Appropriate Design and on Age Assurance.

5Rights supported the African Union with the development of a pioneering Child Online Safety and Empowerment Policy, using our award-winning Toolkit.

5Rights' ground-breaking research methodologies (including our pioneering deliberative youth juries and avatar research) and joint Digital Futures research centre with the LSE have systematically brought emerging issues (from education technology to designing for play) to the table and driven the collaborative exploration of innovative approaches and solutions.

WHAT OUR PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS SAY ABOUT OUR WORK

" I want to thank the 5Rights Foundation for the Child Online Safety Toolkit. Together, we must ensure that youth are empowered for the future and the present. "

Jutta Urpilainen, *European Commissioner for International Partnerships*

" We are grateful for the support of the 5Rights Foundation in contributing to our work in the development of the African Union Child Online Safety and Empowerment Policy in line with international best practices. "

Amani Abou Zeid, *African Union Commissioner*

" 5Rights did a wonderful job creating practical tools for policy makers, the tech sector, and involving children too. This is the kind of thing we need to promote. "

Mikiko Otani, *Chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child*

" 5Rights' expertise was invaluable in providing IEEE with detailed insight into the ways online systems can affect children. Our partnership created important standards to help the technology industry design their digital products and services with children in mind. We look forward to continuing this successful and impactful partnership. "

Sophia A. Muirhead, *Executive Director of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers*

Unless and until we have Child Online Protection as an unavoidable part of connectivity, the harms children face will hold us back from a truly connected world. 5Rights' leadership in this area is unparalleled.

Joanna Rubinstein, *CEO Worldwide Childhood Foundation*

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5Rights brings a message that needs to be heard. A better web for children can be a better web for us all, but it requires a determined and thoughtful approach. 5Rights Foundation understands this better than anyone and do a brilliant job making the case for action.

Adrian Lovett, *CEO World Wide Web Foundation*

HOW WILL YOUR FUNDING HELP US?

Calls for 5Rights' intervention, expertise and advice are growing exponentially. Governments, industries and communities want and ask for our help. We need to build our capacity to meet the demand. You can make this happen.

We need to grow our global presence. This will help us provide on-the-ground support to legislators, campaigners and regulators in the USA, Europe, Africa, Asia and South America.

We need to grow our child and youth network. This is a fantastic group of young people advising us, but the safeguarding, travel and organizational costs of working ethically with young people need significant investment.

We need to keep providing cutting edge research and evidence. The Pathways project and the outputs of the Digital Futures Commission have moved the dial in how children's experience is understood. We need significant funds to support the next three years of research.

We need to keep a drumbeat alive. Reaching out to our audiences is time and cost intensive. We need continued funding to hire experts and deliver campaigns to enable us to raise our voice when and where it matters.

We need to stop those who are acting illegally. That means identifying products and services that are harming children and taking them to task. This requires data gathering and legal support which is expensive.

OUR VALUES

Making change, not noise / Independence / Doing what is necessary, not what is convenient / Building the future, not reinventing the past / Children and young people at the core of every process

OUR VISION

A digital world fit for children and young people, that they can access creatively, knowledgeably and fearlessly.

OUR MISSION

We fight for systemic change that ensures the digital world caters for children and young people by design and default.

It is high time to give children back their childhoods and ensure the digital world is designed for them – and not just corporate profits – to thrive. Please get in touch, and join our journey.

Leanda Barrington-Leach, *5Rights Executive Director*
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It is the right of every young person to access a digital world that offers them the freedom to explore and engage

You can help us achieve this

Partner with us to build the digital world young people deserve