Chapter 5. Modern cultures

Our modern world has evolved, with changes to jobs, families, gender roles and expectations for how we live our lives. This chapter explores these issues through five different perspectives:

The connected economy *– focuses on the increasing economic relevance of mobile digital communications combined with the rise of freelance work through online platforms.*

Gender at work *– presents trends on gender equality with a focus on wage gaps and flexible parental leave policies.*

Changing families *– looks at how families have changed in the 21st century, with the example of births out of wedlock and the prohibition of corporal punishment.*

When virtual becomes reality *–explores how digitalisation has created virtual lives and made them real, and in so doing changed access and ownership of goods and services.*

Ethical consumption *– illustrates the important role our buying behaviour plays in achieving sustainability, with examples of electric cars and meat consumption.*
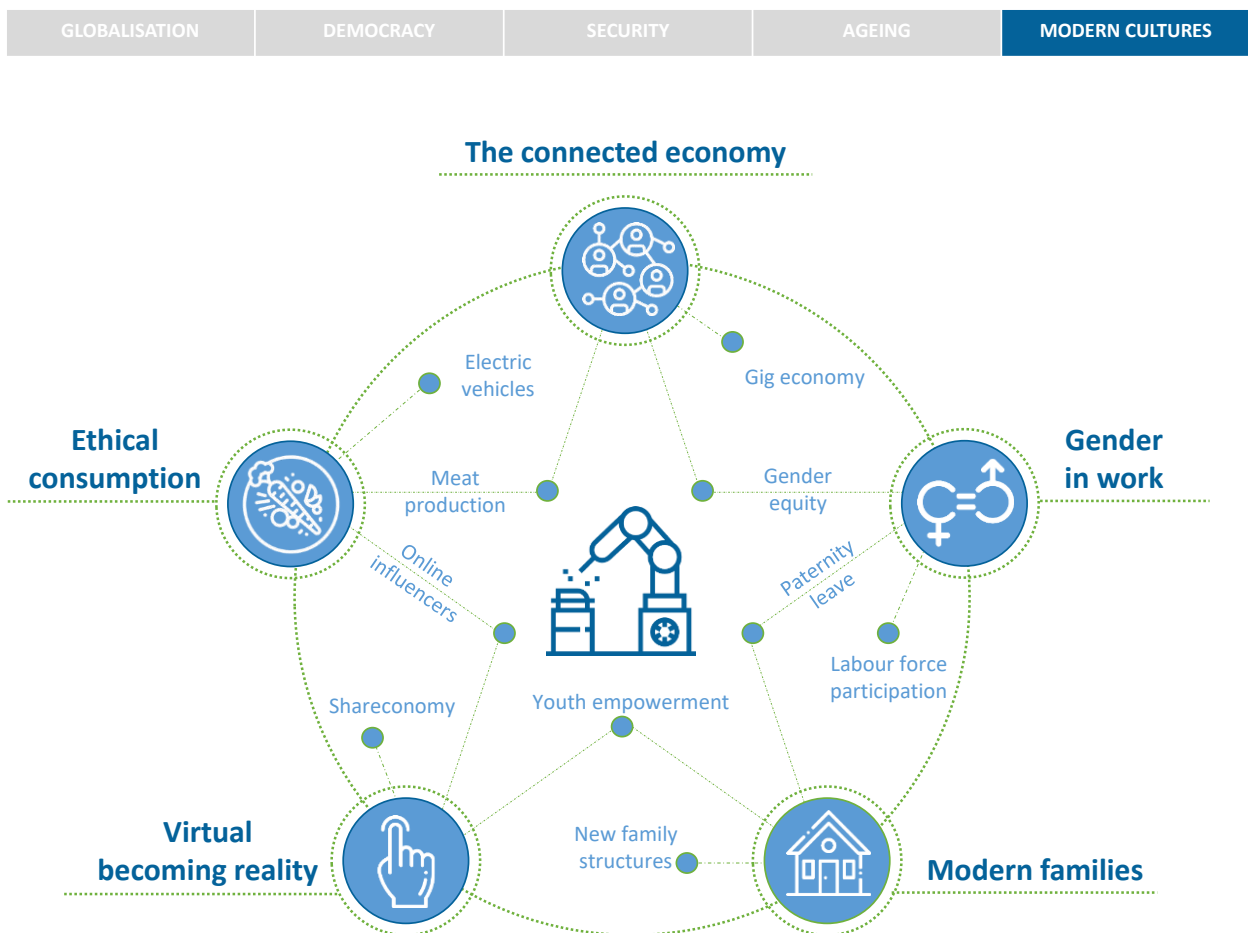
The trends highlighted in this chapter are then linked to education. All of education is explored, from early childhood education and care to lifelong learning. The chapter ends with a look at how using different versions of the future can help us better prepare for the unknown.

MODERN CULTURES: A VISUAL OVERVIEW

We seem to live in a more individualistic world, with a declining sense of belonging to the traditional reference points of community, church or workplace. At the same time, the notion of a "network society" suggests that belonging is changing not disappearing. Modern cultures looks at evolving patterns of work in the digital world, and the emergence of the gig economy and what this means for consumption and ownership. It explores changing families and gender roles, with fewer traditional families and more active parenting from fathers. Education plays a crucial role in equipping coming generations with the necessary skills, knowledge and sentiment to thrive, shape society and preserve their livelihood.

| GLOBALISATION	DEMOCRACY	SECURITY	AGEING	MODERN CULTURES

The connected economy

Electric vehicles

Gig economy

Ethical consumption

Meat production

Gender equity

Gender in work

Online influencers

Paternity leave

Labour force participation

Shareconomy

Youth empowerment

Virtual becoming reality

New family structures

Modern families

Chapter highlights

Virtual becoming reality

Number of Airbnb hosted nights soared

2010 🛏 **260 thousand**

2017 🛏 **56.6 million**

Flexible work

Participation on freelance platforms surged, granting flexibility but often insecurity as well

Millions

50
40
30
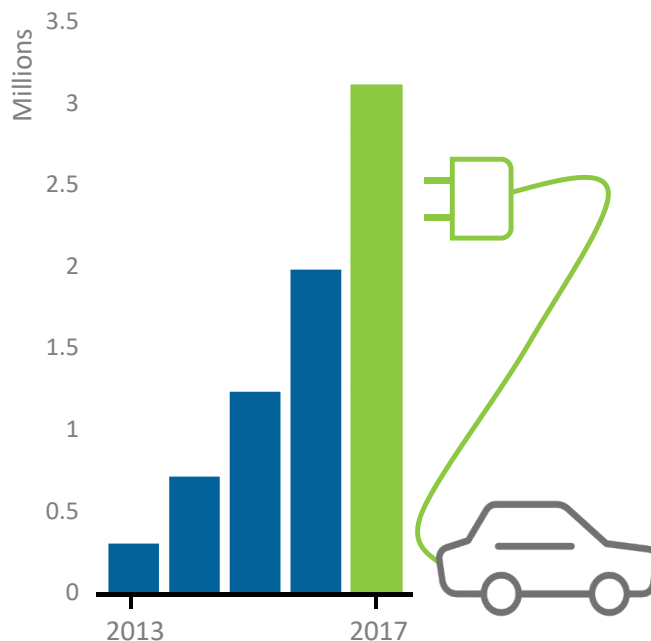20
10
0

2006   2011   2016
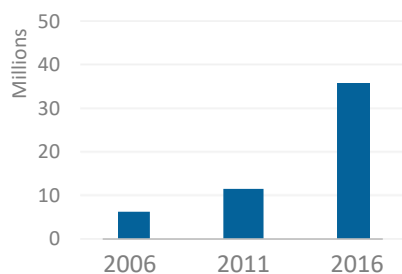
Modern families

40%

of children in OECD countries were born out of wedlock in 2016, up from just over 7% in 1970

Green mobility

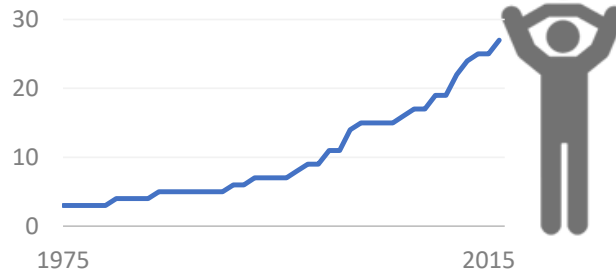Increasingly choosing clean energy transportation worldwide

Number of electric cars

Millions

3.5
3
2.5
2
1.5
1
0.5
0

2013   2017

More active fathers

75% of OECD countries granted paid father-specific leave in 2016, up from just 10% in 1975

Number of countries

30
20
10
0

1975   2015

THE CONNECTED ECONOMY

As Internet access has reached almost universal levels in most OECD countries, the digital economy has become big business, accounting for an important share of jobs and growth. The Internet has transformed markets by making it easier for buyers and sellers, workers and employers to come together across time and space. Our fast-changing societies are creating entirely new categories of work, such as social media managing and augmented reality architecture; at the same time, other jobs become obsolete through automation. The role of education in developing the skills needed for the future of work is indispensable. It must also consider equipping students with the flexibility and adaptability to remain occupationally mobile in a changing world.

Figure 5.1. Access to access

Number of mobile broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, OECD average, 2009-2017
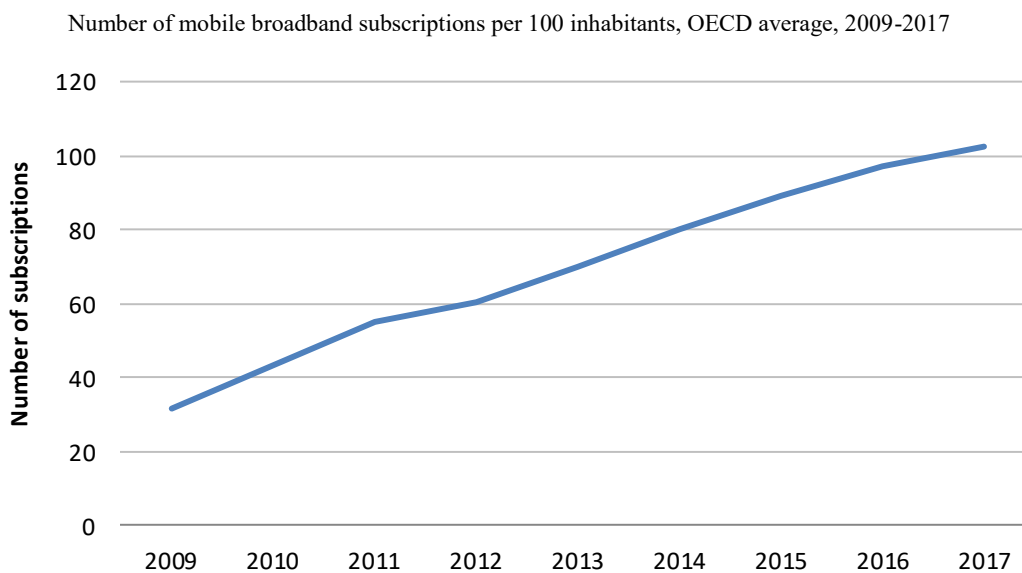
Source: OECD (2018), "Mobile broadband subscriptions" (indicator), https://doi.org/10.1787/1277ddc6-en.

*StatLink* 🖧📈 https://doi.org/10.1787/888933889001

Smartphones and tablets increasingly mediate our daily activity. In recent years, most OECD countries have seen rising numbers of mobile subscriptions providing high-speed or 'broadband' access. At the end of 2017, this trend reached a milestone: More mobile broadband subscriptions than people. The highest numbers were in countries like Japan and Finland – both with more than 150 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants. However some countries have seen declines in recent years, and others remain some way behind: Turkey and Israel both reached around 70 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants at the end of 2017.

Freelance work is historically not new: many people in the past made their living as 'day labourers', hired and paid one day at a time, with no guarantee of further employment in the future. What is new is the rising prevalence of piecework like writing, computer programming, web design, and translating. In our increasingly knowledge-

based economies, firms need this highly specialised expertise – but often for a given project for a specific period, such as for building a new mobile application. Also new is the increasing role of communications technologies in providing a marketplace for those demanding and those supplying freelance work. Online platforms such as Upwork and Freelancer have over 49 million users combined, as well as a global reach (somewhat mitigated by barriers of language, currency, jurisdiction, etc.). Every year, these kinds of platforms facilitate billions of dollars' worth of work. The connected economy has changed the way we work, and indeed, live. Education must be prepared to change with it. Students will need to be equipped with skills for future job and labour markets. Additionally, they will need to be able to navigate the increasing uncertainty and potential precariousness of the gig economy.

Figure 5.2. Freeing up work?

Combined registered users of Upwork and Freelancer, 2005-2016
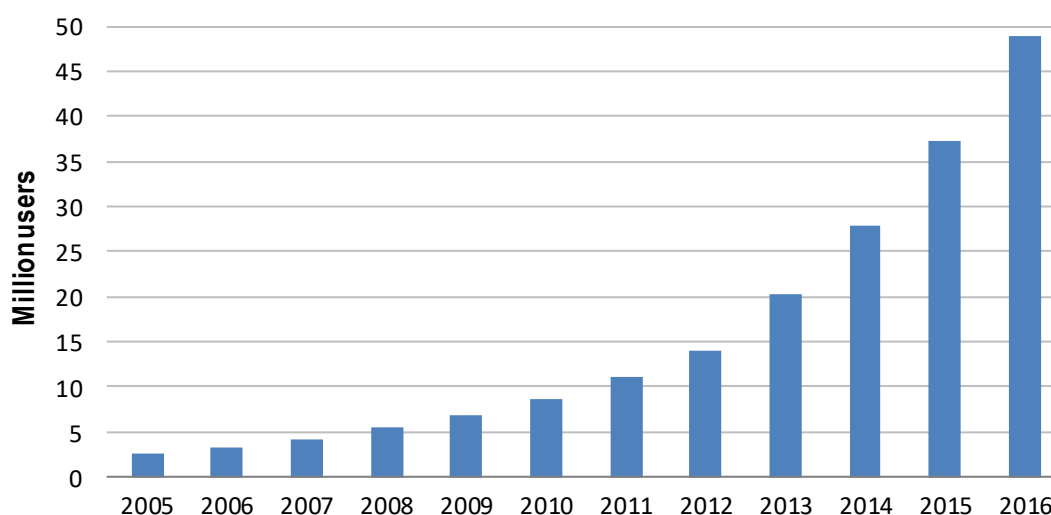
Source: OECD (2017), *OECD Employment Outlook 2017*, https://doi.org/10.1787/empl_outlook-2017-en.

StatLink 🖳 https://doi.org/10.1787/888933889020

And education?

- How can education help to bridge digital divides (associated with both access to technology and the skills to use technology appropriately) to take advantage of the opportunities of the digital economy?
- What are the consequences for on-the-job learning and training if increasing numbers of workers have no permanent fixed employer to sponsor such education?
- Digitalisation changes the way people communicate and collaborate, with less (or potentially no) face-to-face contact. What does this mean for the world of work and what are the implications for education and training systems?

GENDER AT WORK

Women are increasingly participating in the labour market, thanks in part to campaigns for equal work for women over many decades. In the 1970s and 1980s, many OECD countries banned discrimination in the labour market on the ground of gender. These efforts continue, including with Iceland in 2017 becoming the first country to legally require companies employing more than 25 people to obtain certification that they offer equal pay for work of equal value. Gender-related disparities in education such as choice of subjects and differing attainment appear at an early age and may lead to unequal work prospects for men and women. Preventing discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities are therefore important issues well before children leave compulsory education.

Figure 5.3. Closing the gap

Unadjusted difference between median earnings of men and women relative to median earnings of men, % of male median wage, OECD average, 1995-2016
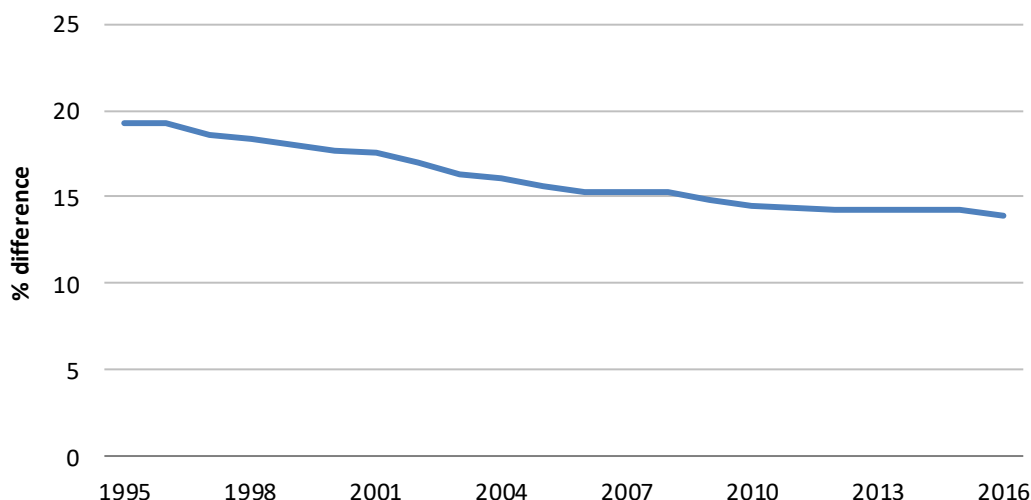
Note: Data refer to full-time employees and to self-employed.

Source: OECD (2018), "Gender wage gap" (indicator), OECD Gender Data Portal, www.oecd.org/gender/data/.

*StatLink* ᵃᵢˢᴾ https://doi.org/10.1787/888933889039

The gender wage gap has been declining in OECD countries for decades, although the overall average decline has been small in recent years. Some countries have seen particularly dramatic decreases, for example the United Kingdom, where the gap has been reduced from almost 50% in 1970 to below 20% today – still above the OECD average of 14%. Korea is the OECD country with the greatest gap, at 35% in 2017, although this continues to shrink. For all countries, there is still some way to go, not only in equal earnings, but also in type of work. For example, in most OECD countries women are more likely than men to be in part-time work and to occupy positions with lower status.

Women also hold fewer positions as executives and directors, although this is also changing.

One of the reasons for different career trajectories between men and women is that it is women who predominantly take time away from the working environment to have children, which can slow networking opportunities and is perceived to reduce awareness of new developments needed to remain good at one's work. One interesting counter trend to this is the increasing numbers of men who take paternity leave. Not only beneficial for the infant, this can potentially also free up female partners to return to the labour market. Back in 1975, only three OECD countries (Belgium, Luxembourg and Spain) provided the option of father-specific leave. Since then, an increasing number of OECD countries have joined them, reaching 27 in 2016.

Figure 5.4. Partners in time

Number of OECD countries granting paid paternity leave, 1975-2016
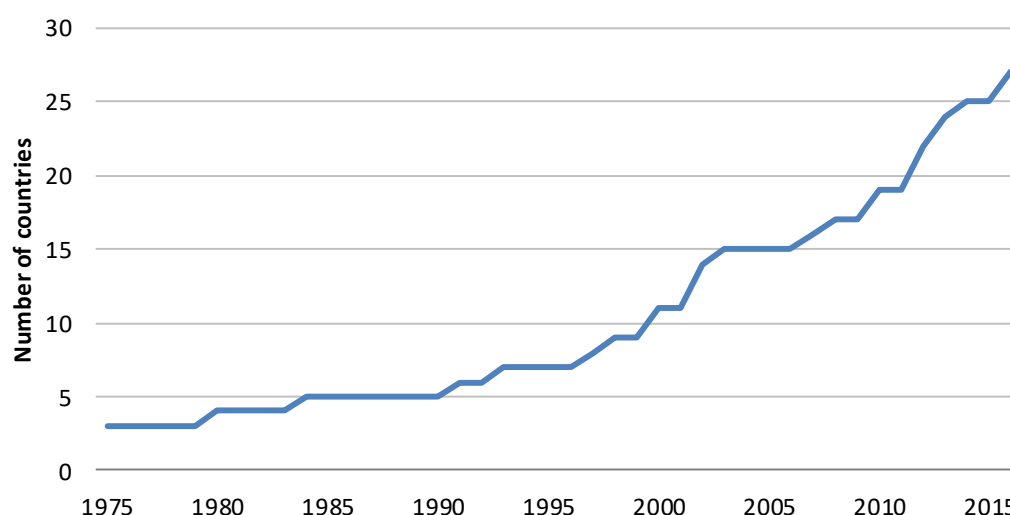
Source: OECD (2018) "Length of paid father-specific leave" (indicator), OECD Gender Data Portal, www.oecd.org/gender/data/.

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And education?

- Initiatives such as father-specific leave and compulsory equal pay do not necessarily change traditional attitudes, which value men spending more time at work and women spending more time on parenting. Can education help?
- With the increasing participation of women in the labour force, the demand for after-school care has increased. How might schools and kindergartens need to adapt accordingly?
- The numbers of children in early childhood education and care are expected to continue to rise. What does this mean for the capacity of the system? How can governments ensure high quality service delivery and standards?

CHANGING FAMILIES

Families are changing in many different ways, reflecting our evolving economies, societies, and values. As social norms have changed in many countries, bringing more relaxed laws and attitudes towards divorce, the predominant model of the nuclear family (two opposite-sex married parents and their biological children living all together) has changed. Now families of many kinds are common: Single-parent families; families with three or more generations in one house; families with unmarried or remarried parents; families with half-siblings and step-siblings; and families headed by same-sex and interracial couples are all part of our modern culture. Education plays an important role in supporting modern and traditional families and ensuring that learning needs are met for all.

Figure 5.5. Out of wedlock, but not out of the ordinary

Proportion of all births where mother's marital status at time of birth is other than married, 1970 and 2016
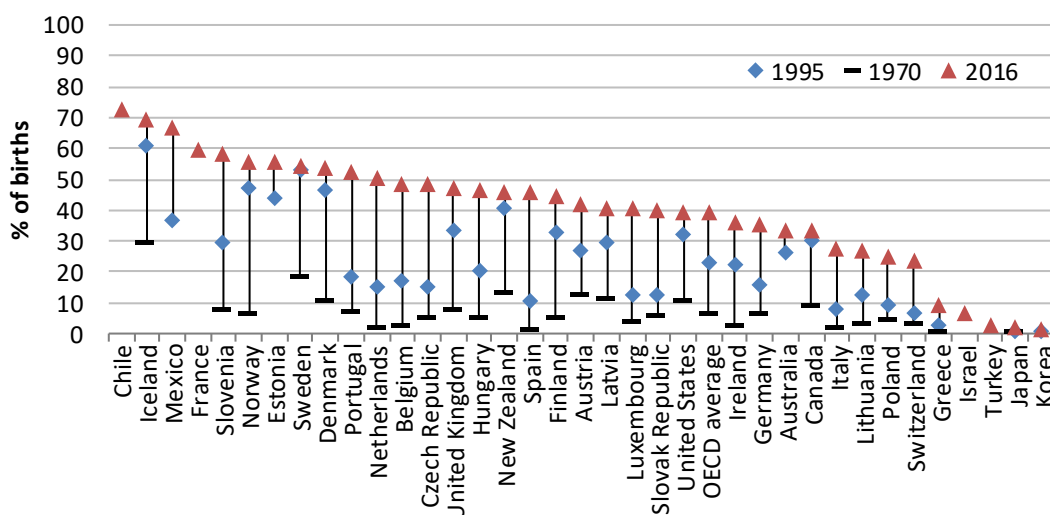
Note: Where the data for countries were not consistently available in the same years, figures from the closest year are used. Respective countries are labelled with a letter (see StatLink for full information).
*Source*: OECD (2018), "Share of births outside of marriage" (indicator), *OECD Family Database*, https://stats.oecd.org/.

StatLink 🗐📊 https://doi.org/10.1787/888933889077

In most countries worldwide, children were traditionally born to a woman who was married at the time of birth. However, the institution of marriage is not as central as it once was: Marriage rates are declining, divorce rates rising, and many couples are opting for civil partnerships rather than marriage. By the mid-1990s, extramarital births accounted for almost a quarter of births in OECD countries, and around half of births in Nordic countries like Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. In 2016, extramarital births represented around 40% of all births on average across OECD countries, even reaching 70% in Chile and Iceland. The taboo surrounding children born out of wedlock is in decline as the types and forms of modern families evolve.

Children's upbringing is changing too. Historically many societies considered corporal punishment (for example, slapping or spanking naughty children) to be beneficial; but this attitude has been shifting. As child rights to dignity, protection from violence and equal treatment under the law are strengthened, more and more countries are legislating against corporal punishment. In 1979, Sweden became the first country in the world to make it illegal to spank children in all settings. The number of countries with equivalent legislation has steadily risen, and now stands at 54.

Figure 5.6. Spare the child

Cumulative number of states prohibiting all corporal punishment of children by law, 1978-2018
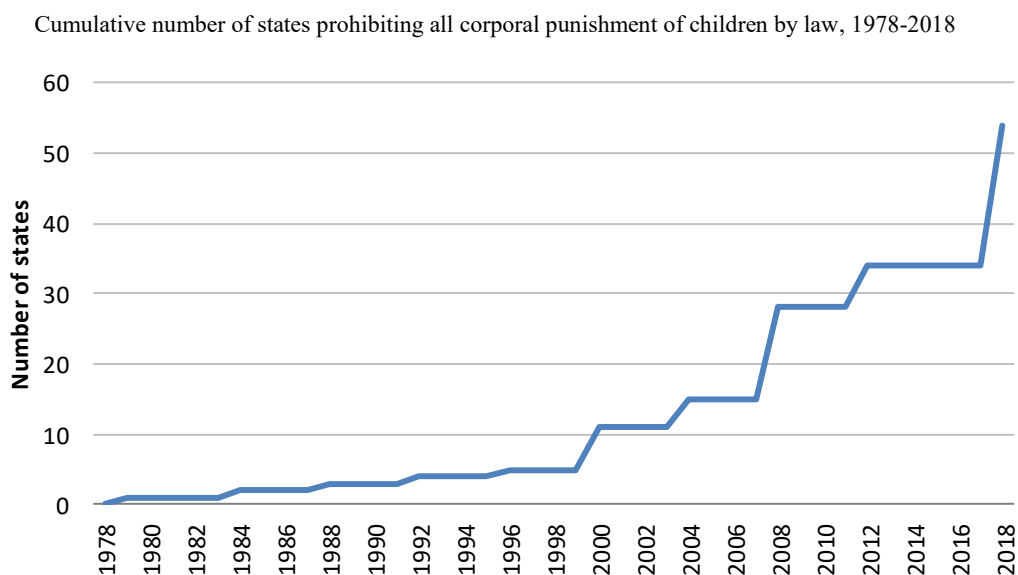
Note: Countries included have made corporal punishment unlawful in all settings, including the home.

Source: Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2018), "Working towards universal prohibition of corporal punishment", https://endcorporalpunishment.org/.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888933889096


And education?

- As families change, children's need for stability and certainty remains the same. How can education help provide a sense of security for children even as their family arrangements may shift, for example in cases of divorce or remarriage, death of a parent etc.?
- There is a difficult debate about the rights and responsibilities of parents and schools. What is the role of educators as part of a system designed to protect children from violence and abuse? Does your system have mandatory reporting of suspected physical, emotional or sexual abuse? Should it?
- Effective education at the school level relies on good home-school relations. Does the growing diversity of family structures affect the nature of these relationships? If so, how?

WHEN VIRTUAL BECOMES REALITY

The Internet has become an integral part of our lives. Many common activities that once required physical contact or social interaction are now carried out online, such as talking to family and friends or consulting a doctor. But digital is no virtual "second life". It is increasingly an integral part of our physical reality. Whether it is a job, a room for the night, or the love of your life, online activity often translates into offline outcomes. This challenges the education system, which must take advantage of the tools and strengths of new technologies while simultaneously addressing concerns about potential misuse, such as cyberbullying, loss of privacy or illegal trade in goods.

Figure 5.7. Mass self-communication and creative expression

Individuals using the Internet (last 3 months) for uploading self-created content on sharing websites, 2008 and 2017
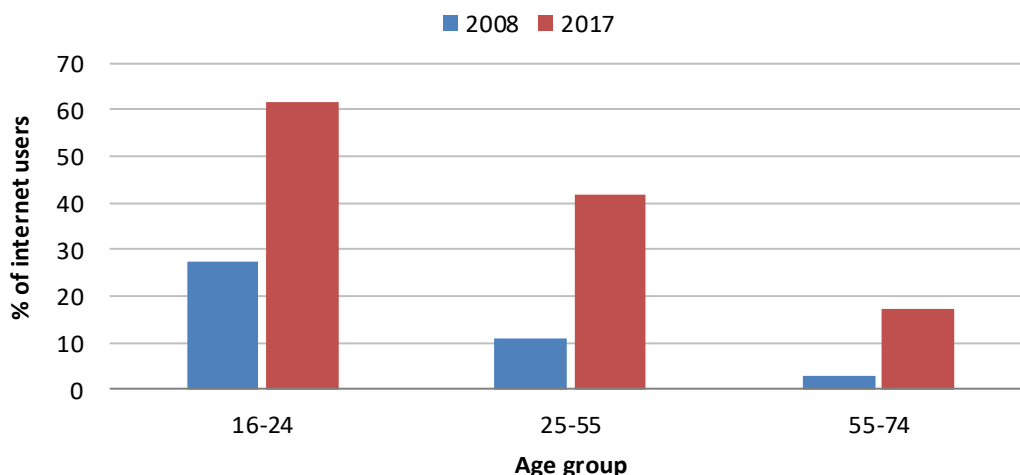
Note: The figure is based on average data for 26 OECD countries (see StatLink for full information).
*Source*: OECD (2018), *ICT Access and Usage by Households and Individuals* (database), https://stats.oecd.org/.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888933889115

Social networks are spaces for individual and collective expression and creativity. They allow us to communicate with the wider world and maintain multiple and broader identities and social connections. People increasingly share self-created content online via sharing and social networks sites, like YouTube, Twitter and Instagram, giving birth to phenomena such as self-branding and micro-celebrities ("influencers", "YouTubers"). Cultural shifts linked to digitalisation are particularly relevant for children, adolescents and young adults, who are more frequently users of emerging online services. Education can encourage students' engagement in and motivation towards positive ICT uses and the development of strong digital skills, especially for those students who do not receive such support at home.

Online platforms are changing the face of our society, transforming how we call a taxi, order take-out food and book accommodation. They also help find new value for assets in disuse, such as a spare room, although concerns have emerged around the rise in temporary accommodation which risks pricing out local residents and putting pressure on local services and infrastructure. Airbnb hosts provided a quarter million nights' accommodation in 2010, only about a year and a half after its debut in the market. In 2016, the platform served more than 50 million users worldwide. As brokers of this kind become more commonplace, questions arise about how they could be used to distribute educational activities, for example through peer-to-peer virtual learning.

Figure 5.8. Log on, check in, cash out

Airbnb hosts and nights hosted in the US and major European markets, 2010-2016
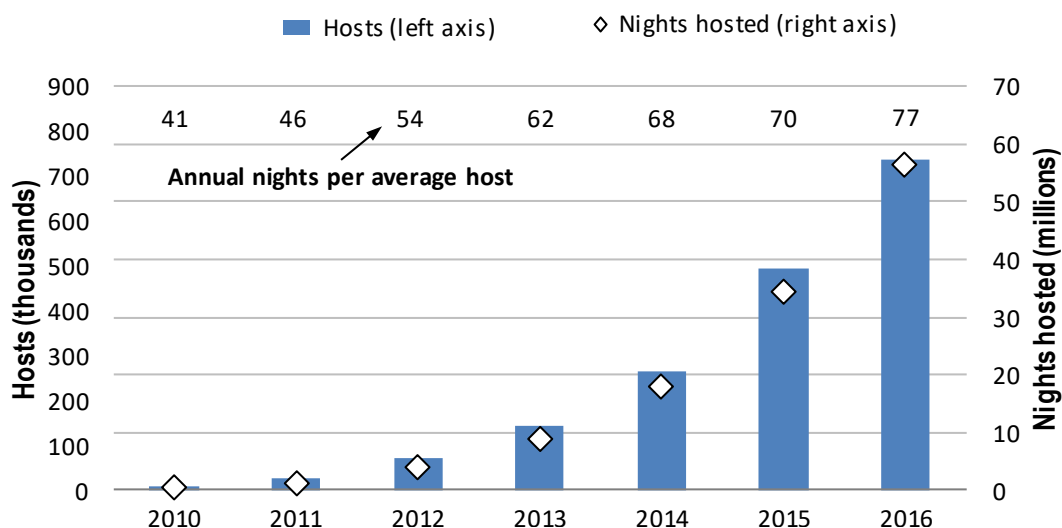
Note: European markets include Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK. The number of hosts shown in this figure is 'hosts who hosted'.

Source: OECD (2017), *OECD Digital Economy Outlook 2017*, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264276284-en.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888933889134

And education?

- How can education support all students develop the digital skills needed to create and produce content, which can help their self-expression, learning and well-being?
- Is a peer-to-peer market for education and training (akin to Airbnb, but for education) something we should start preparing for today?
- Do schools have the partnerships they need (e.g. with technology experts, entrepreneurs and more) to help their students develop skills for dynamic online marketplaces?

ETHICAL CONSUMPTION

As more humans fill the planet, the more impact we have on the environment. We can moderate or even reverse some of the negative effects, as shown by successful campaigns to ban chemicals responsible for the hole in the ozone layer. Many people are making purchasing choices that help to mitigate the environmental or social impact, for example choosing electric cars to reduce emissions, or buying fair trade goods. However, other human behaviours, such as the rising consumption of meat, continue to put pressure on our environment. Education can foster the knowledge and social awareness needed to make sustainable choices; and empower individuals to identify and take action in cases of environmental degradation or social exploitation.

Figure 5.9. Eco-mobility

Number of electric cars in circulation worldwide, 2013-2017
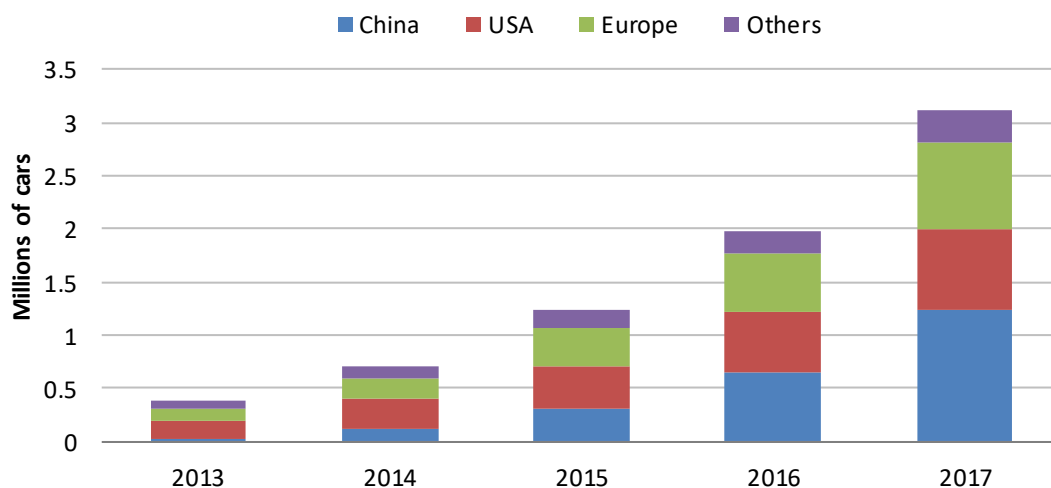
Source: IEA (2018), *Global Electric Vehicle Outlook 2018*, www.iea.org/gevo2018/.

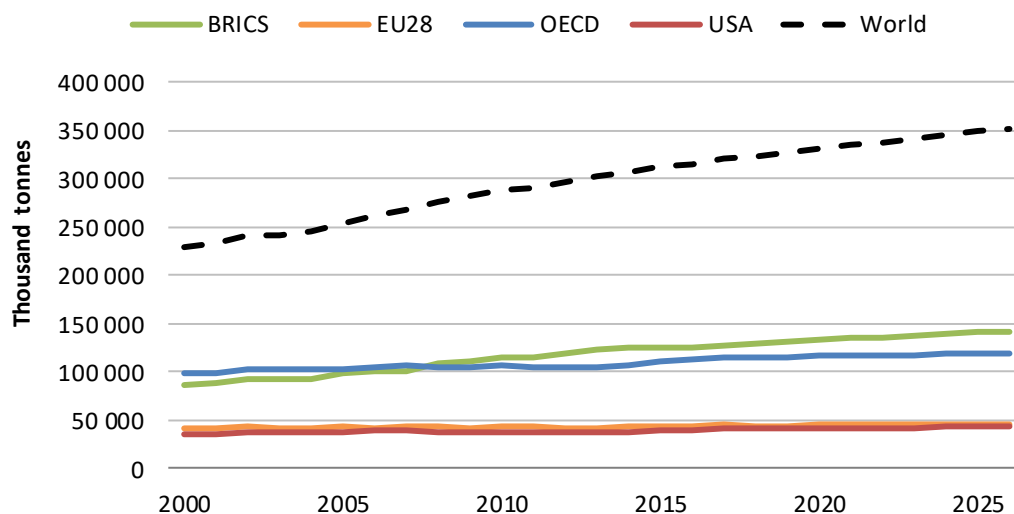StatLink ᐧᐧᐧ https://doi.org/10.1787/888933889153

Transportation has a considerable environmental impact. Most journeys imply the burning of fossil fuels (especially for aviation). Even electric cars can have an impact, as coal and gas can be used to generate electricity. But electric vehicles also have the option of being powered by 'cleaner' sources of energy such as wind and solar. And unlike conventional cars, electric ones do not produce emissions at the point of use so they do not directly contribute to the pollution of city air. Sales of electric vehicles are rising: By 2017, there were over three million electric cars in circulation, with the largest number in China, followed by Europe and the United States. Electric car-sharing fleets in cities are also increasingly popular, as congested urban areas seek innovative ways to reduce emissions and air pollution.

Conversely, many industries which make intensive use of natural resources such as land and water are on the rise. One such industry is meat production. Although annual

meat consumption has remained largely stable in the EU and the USA since around 2000, worldwide meat consumption has increased every year for many years, and forecasts suggest that it will continue to do so until at least 2026. The increase in consumption is largely driven by some emerging economies, notably Brazil, China, Russia and Vietnam. However, in terms of overall volume consumed, the USA is currently the largest consumer and is forecast to remain near the top, surpassed only by China in 2026. The popularity of vegetarian and vegan lifestyles, along with innovations making meat substitutes better and more widely available, could challenge the continued rise in meat production.

Figure 5.10. Carnivorous future

Past and forecast annual meat consumption by location, thousand tonnes, 2000-2026

Source: OECD (2018), "Meat consumption" (indicator) https://data.oecd.org/agroutput/meat-consumption.htm.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888933889172

And education?

- What is the role of formal education in raising awareness and creating responsible citizens with civic values, critical thinking skills and sustainable consumption habits?
- Should governments incentivise walk-to-school, electrical transport, or other "clean" forms of transit for school commutes in order to reduce pollution and reliance on cars?
- Do VET programmes provide high-quality apprenticeships in emerging skill areas such as clean energy, bike and car-sharing networks, or other? If not, what is the best way to support them to offer this?

MODERN CULTURES AND EDUCATION: MOVING FORWARD

What are some of the ways the trends presented in this chapter interact with education, and how can education affect these trends? Some answers are obvious and immediate, for example, the impact of women in the workforce, and conversely, the need for high quality early childhood education and care. Others operate in the longer term, such as trends in sustainable consumption.

Connecting education and modern cultures

Creativity and entrepreneurship

- Equiping students with knowledge, skills and attitudes to become future entrepreneurs
- Promoting the teaching and learning of creativity and other skills that go beyond traditional distinctions between disciplines
- Practicing collaborative problem-solving and teamwork through hands-on projects within and beyond the classroom

Values and attitudes

- Addressing differences in social values within communities and upholding respect among students
- Promoting trust and respect between parents, teachers and administrators
- Developing awarness of gender-based and other forms of discrimination to build a zero tolerance for discrimination culture in educational settings

Diverse families

- Welcoming all families, traditional or non-traditional, in schools
- Acknowledging multicultural backgrounds in the classroom and providing teachers with the tools to teach diverse classrooms
- Creating strategies and providing resources for schools to effectively communicate with all households

Digital divides

- Ensuring that all students have the digital skills necessary for the modern world, both hard and soft
- Fostering effective integration of pedagogical, digital and content knowledge of teachers
- Fostering positive uses of and attitudes towards ICT, especially among female and more disadvantaged student populations

Future thinking: preparing for uncertainty

Despite the best laid plans, the future is inherently unpredictable. This section explores some examples of uncertainties surrounding the trends discussed in this chapter.

⚠ SHOCKS & SURPRISES — Smart drugs?

- There is significant research today into drugs that can enhance our cognitive performance. This concerns both novel and well-known substances. For example, some people take tiny doses ('microdoses') of LSD in the hope that doing so will boost their creativity. There are always risks associated with drug taking.

- *What if 'smart drugs' came into widespread use? What could some of the risks be? Would they apply equally to all ages, including children in primary school (or younger)? What could be the issues around equality of access?*

CONTRADICTIONS — Family time: learning together at the expense of playing together?

- As remote virtual work and learning develop, they could partially replace their physical counterparts. That could mean more time at home for everyone, and adults could become much more involved in children's learning. Conversely, the lines between the personal and professional could continue to blur, and reduce time for play and informal interaction.

- *Does education have a role in setting boundaries for time spent studying? Can play be a required part of formal education?*

DISCONTINUITIES — An appetite for ethical food?

- Could developments in technology such as improved meat substitutes, artificial ('lab-grown') meat, and different attitudes to alternative protein sources (such as insects as food) reverse the current trend of rising meat consumption?

- *Could this become a deliberate and mandatory policy action for public (and private) school food services? Could this open a new area of study for agricultural colleges?*

COMPLEXITY — Inclusion by technology?

- Diagnoses of learning difficulties such as ADHD and autism have grown in recent years. The cause is unclear, but likely due to a combination of reduced stigma, better diagnoses and reporting, and environmental input.

- *How can technology be used to adapt learning and work to make them more accessible to people with different needs?*

FIND OUT MORE

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Glossary

- **AirBnb**: A privately held company that acts as an online marketplace for people looking to rent out their homes and as provider for touristic services.
- **Broadband, access**: Internet access via a high-speed wired and wireless networks, such as DSL, fibre or satellite, capable of download speeds of at least 256 kbit/s.
- **Broadband, mobile**: Mobile subscriptions that advertise data speeds of 256 kbit/s or greater. The subscription must allow access to the Internet via HTTP and must have been used to make a data connection via Internet Protocol (IP) in the previous three months. Standard SMS and MMS messaging do not count as an active Internet data connection even if they are delivered via IP.
- **Corporal punishment**: Any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light, as well as non-physical forms of punishment that are cruel and degrading.
- **Extramarital birth**: The birth of a child to a mother whose legal status is other than married.
- **Freelancer**: A global crowdsourcing marketplace website founded in 2009 that allows potential employers to post jobs that freelancers can then bid to complete.
- **Gender wage gap**: The difference between median earnings of men and women relative to median earnings of men. Data refer to full-time employees and to self-employed.
- **Gig economy**: A way of working based on temporary jobs or doing separate pieces of work, each paid separately, rather than working for an employer.
- **Leave, father-specific**: Any employment-protected parental or home care leave that can be used only by the father or 'other parent'. Any entitlements that are initially given to the father but that can be transferred to the mother are not included.
- **Leave, maternity**: A job-protected leave of absence for employed women prior to and after childbirth or, in some countries, adoption. Most countries allow beneficiaries to combine pre- and post-birth leave, while some mandate a short period of pre-birth leave and six to ten weeks after childbirth. Almost all OECD countries provide specific public income support payments that are tied to the length of maternity leave.
- **Leave, parental**: Employment-protected leave of absence for employed parents that supplements maternity and paternity leave. In most, though not all, countries it follows maternity leave. Unlike eligibility for public income support that is often family-based, entitlement to parental leave is individual so that only one parent can claim support at any one time.
- **Leave, paternity**: Employment- or job-protected leave of absence for employed fathers after childbirth, or in some countries, adoption.
- **Meat consumption, worldwide**: The carcass weight of beef and veal, pig and sheep as well as the ready to cook weight of poultry.
- **Occupational mobility**: The ease with which a person (or resource) can move from one job to another.
- **Online platform**: Software-based facilities offering two- or even multisided markets where providers and users of content, goods and services can meet.
- **Piece work**: Work paid for according to the number of things or amount produced, rather than time spent.
- **Upwork**: Upwork Global Inc., founded in 2013 after the merger of the platforms Elance and oDesk, is a global freelancing platform where businesses and independent professionals connect and collaborate remotely.