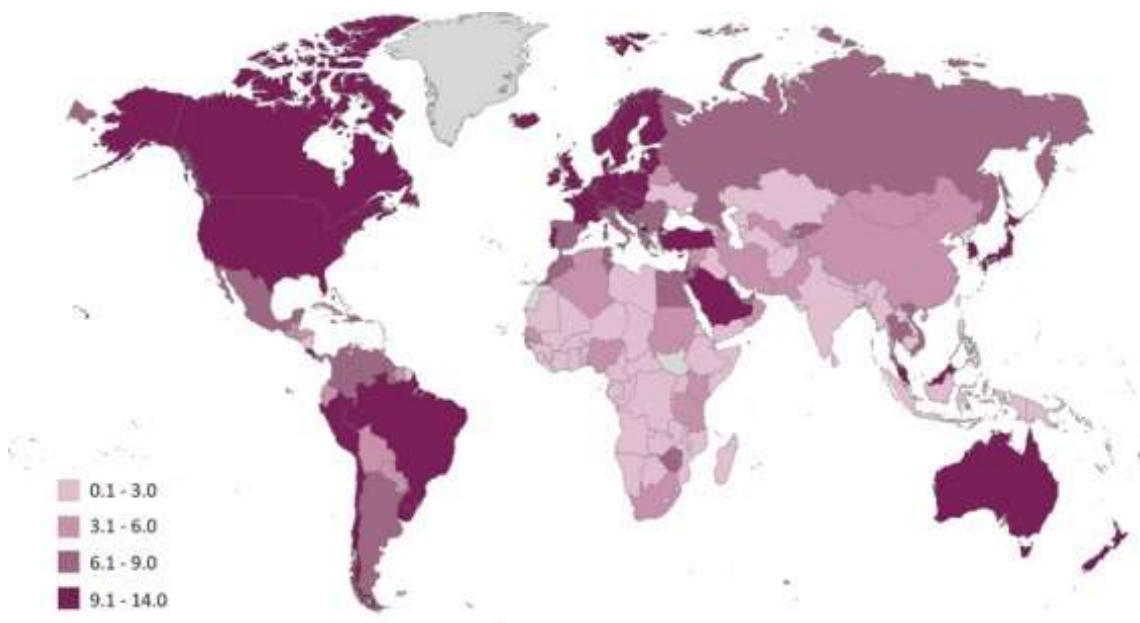# WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE OUR 'DIGITAL NATIVES'?

Thirty percent of the world's youth population between the ages of 15 and 24 years old has been active online for at least five years.

A global study by researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology and International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is the first attempt to measure by country the world's "digital natives"—people born around the time the personal computer was introduced and have spent their lives connected with technology.

Digital natives as a percentage of total population, 2012.

In South Korea, 99.6 percent of young people are active, the highest percentage in the world. Nearly 96 percent of American millennials are digital natives. That figure is behind Japan at 99.5 percent, and several European countries, including Finland, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

THEY WILL DEFINE THE FUTURE

The percentage that Michael Best, an associate professor at Georgia Tech, thinks is the most important, though, is the number of digital natives as compared to a country's total population.

"That's because a country's future will be defined by today's young people and by technology," says Best, who co-led the study and, jointly with ITU, developed the model that calculated the worldwide figures. "Countries with a high proportion of young people who are already online are positioned to define and lead the digital age of tomorrow."

The countries with the highest proportion of digital natives among their population are mostly rich nations, which have high levels of overall Internet penetration. Iceland is at the top of the list with 13.9 percent. The United States is sixth at 13.1 percent. A big surprise is Malaysia, a middle-income country with one of the highest proportions of digital natives, ranked 4th at 13.4 percent. Malaysia has a strong history of investing in educational technology. (View the full list.)

The countries with the smallest estimated proportion of digital natives are Timor-Leste at less than 1 percent, Myanmar, and Sierra Leone. The bottom 10 consists entirely of African or Asian nations, many of which are suffering from conflict and/or have very low Internet availability.

DIGITAL NATIVE POPULATION GROWTH

However, the report notes that Internet usage has increased significantly in the developing world during the past five years. The ITU believes the digital native population in these regions will more than double by 2017.

"Youth are transforming our world through the power of information and communication technologies," says Hamadoun Touré, ITU secretary-general. Overall, there are approximately 363 million digital natives out of a world population of nearly 7 billion (5.2 percent).

The model was developed using data collected by the ITU through surveys conducted around the globe. The study is part of the ITU's *Measuring the Information Society* 2013 report, which was released on October 7.