



THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Information technology has transformed the way we communicate, learn, and conduct business. As we become more reliant on the Internet to search for jobs and manage so many aspects of daily living, it is imperative that we connect our nation's most vulnerable citizens to this vital technology. Today, 1 out of every 5 Americans are dependent on cell phones to access the Internet in their homes. And, while the majority of higher-income Americans have access to broadband in their homes, just 45% of those earning less than \$30,000 have access and only 24% of those without a high school education have in-home access. According to the Federal Communications Commission, over 60 million Americans lack basic digital literacy. There are several barrier to adoption – all of which ConnectHome and ConnectHomeUSA communities are addressing:

Cost: Many families can't afford the cost of buying or maintaining a computer. Others find it difficult to navigate confusing broadband packages or figure out a plan that works for their limited budgets.

Skills: Over 60 million Americans lack the digital literacy skills to take advantage of the resources and services found on the Internet. While they may own computers or enjoy access to broadband, they're not comfortable or confident users of the web.

Relevance: Many families are used to getting by without the Internet. Often, they're unaware of the life-changing opportunities that are available online.

Perception: Many families see the Internet as an unknown and dangerous place that can threaten their privacy, their financial security, and the safety of their children.

ConnectHome and ConnectHomeUSA communities are at the forefront of bridging this digital divide by helping HUD-assisted residents access low-cost Internet access, devices and the training to use them. This work is connecting residents to jobs, children and parents to schools and educational opportunity, and reducing social isolation among elderly/disabled residents. As more and more transactions of daily living move online, this work will continue to be important for:

JOBS

The Internet is quickly becoming the primary way employers connect with job-seekers. Importantly, it also allows residents to learn new skills, communicate with prospective employers, obtain work-related certifications, apply for jobs, research opportunities, and even, work from home.

Connecting HUD-assisted residents to the Internet will help them succeed in this new landscape:

- The rate for Americans looking for jobs on the Internet grew from 19 percent in 2013 to 27 percent in 2015
- Digital skills provide a career pathway into middle- and high-skill jobs
- Digitally-intensive middle skills jobs pay more than those that do not require digital skills
- Nearly 8 in 10 middle-skill jobs require digital skills
- 60 to 70 percent of all active job openings in any month are now posted online

ACCESS TO SERVICES

Government services are steadily moving information and benefits applications online. The private sector is rapidly moving in this direction -- e.g. banks allow full access to banking and financial planning through online platforms.

- 61% of Internet users bank online
- Many federal and state agencies administer telehealth services to constituents
- State agencies provide online platforms for services like Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Children's Health Insurance Program, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

EDUCATION

Roughly one-third of households whose incomes fall below \$50,000 and with children ages 6 to 17 do not have a high-speed Internet connection at home. However, only 8.4% of households with annual incomes over \$50,000 are unconnected.

Low-income homes with children are four times more likely to be without high-speed Internet, making it more difficult for these students to reach their full potential. The inability to complete homework assignments or engage in the digital world -- known as the "homework gap" -- compromises the classroom and a child's potential.

Sources:

- *Closing the Digital Divide, Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, July 2016*
- *Access to Broadband Fuels Workforce Development and Enhances Job Skills, NTIA, 11/15/16*
- *Pew Research Center: Internet/Broadband Fact Sheet*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Research on broadband and the digital divide:

- Census: Current Population Survey – Computer and Internet Use
- HUD: Understanding the Broadband Access Gap
- NTIA: BTOP Economic and Social Impact Study
- HUD: Baseline Internet Access Among HUD Communities

Measuring the digital divide in your community:

- Census: American Community Survey
- Census: American Housing Survey
- ED: National Center for Education Statistics
- HUD: Picture of Subsidized Households
- DOL: Bureau of Labor Statistics
- FCC: Local Telephone Competition and Broadband Deployment

Resources to help you narrow the digital divide:

- EveryoneOn
- Playbook

- Alliance for Technology Refurbishing and Reuse

