

UNIVERSAL BROADBAND: ESSENTIAL FOR AN INCLUSIVE DIGITAL ECONOMY

Access to broadband is essential for full participation in American life and the modern economy. But in some cases, networks have not extended as far as needed into rural America. In other cases, people simply cannot afford locally available broadband options. This problem disproportionately affects communities of color and low-income Americans.

THE PROBLEM



AT LEAST
18 million Americans
do not have high speed broadband.¹



The problem is worse in rural areas and among low-income households.

WHY EVERYONE NEEDS RELIABLE BROADBAND – NOW

EDUCATION: All children need broadband for success in school.



The “**homework gap**” is worse for students of color and those in low-income households.

A study from McKinsey & Company found that without high-quality remote learning, a conducive learning environment, or other factors exacerbated by COVID-19 school closures, the learning loss will likely be greatest among low-income, Black, and Hispanic students.⁴

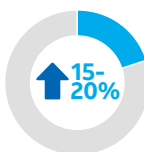


By eighth grade, a majority of students **use the internet to complete homework.**²

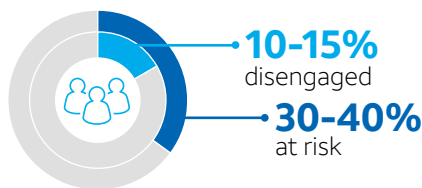


Black students could fall behind **10.3 months**, Hispanic students by **9.2 months**, and low-income students by **more than a year.**⁴

Sal Khan, founder of Khan Academy, estimates about **10-15 percent** of children are currently disengaged from distance learning, with another **30-40 percent** at risk.³

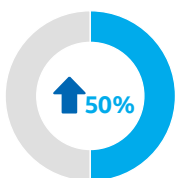


Existing achievement gaps could grow by **15-20 percent.**⁴



16.9 million children do not have high-speed home internet access necessary to support online learning.⁵

TELEHEALTH: Keeping Americans healthy through broadband.



In March, telehealth visits were up **50 percent.**⁸

Over 9 million Medicare beneficiaries used a telehealth service from mid-March through mid-June 2020.⁹



Dually eligible beneficiaries (low-income beneficiaries that qualify for both Medicare and Medicaid) had higher rates of telemedicine use: **34 percent of dually eligible beneficiaries** compared to 26 percent of Medicare-only.¹⁰



“Millions of disconnected students are being left behind.”

THE WASHINGTON POST⁶

“Schools need to become broadband champions.”

NICOL TURNER LEE, BROOKINGS⁷

“We can’t let this crisis turn into a catastrophe.”

SAL KHAN, FOUNDER OF KHAN ACADEMY³

GETTING THERE

\$1.7 trillion

Sound, pro-investment policies generated **\$1.7 trillion of investment** since 1996, delivering robust broadband to many Americans.¹¹ But connectivity and accessibility is still an issue for some American households.

Three steps to build on this foundation and achieve universal broadband:

1

Fully fund the Broadband DATA Act, to identify more precisely where households are not connected and better target funds to help people get connected.

2

Promote rural broadband deployment through technology neutral policies that are informed by practical engineering.

3

Address affordability through a modernized Lifeline program by converting it to a SNAP-like benefit system that provides flexibility and choice for consumers, enabling them to pick the broadband option that's right for them.

“The word is ‘urgency.’”

AMY HINOJOSA, MANA¹²

Inaction is no longer acceptable. Congress must ensure a secure funding source so that all Americans have access to broadband.

1 FCC, “2020 Broadband Report,” 20 Apr 2020

2 Pew Research Center, “As schools close due to the coronavirus, some U.S. students face a digital ‘homework gap,’” 16 Mar 2020

3 AT&T Policy Forum, “Universal Broadband: Essential for an Inclusive Digital Economy,” 1 Sept 2020

4 McKinsey, “COVID-19 and student learning in the United States: The hurt could last a lifetime,” 1 Jun 2020

5 Future Ready, “Students of Color Caught in the Homework Gap,” 6 Aug 2020

6 Washington Post, “A national crisis: As coronavirus forces many schools online this fall, millions of disconnected students are being left behind,” 16 Aug 2020

7 AT&T Policy Forum, “Universal Broadband: Essential for an Inclusive Digital Economy,” 1 Sept 2020

8 CNBC, “Telehealth visits are booming as doctors and patients embrace distancing amid the coronavirus crisis,” 4 Apr 2020

9 Health Affairs, “Early Impact Of CMS Expansion Of Medicare Telehealth During COVID-19,” 15 July 2020

10 Id

11 USTelecom, “USTelecom Industry Metrics and Trends 2020,” Feb 2020

12 AT&T Policy Forum, “Universal Broadband: Essential for an Inclusive Digital Economy,” 1 Sept 2020