

# Fact Sheet: The Digital Divide

## What is the digital divide?

The digital divide is the gap between those communities that have access to the Internet and those communities that do not. Often, this gap falls along racial, economic, and geographical lines. According to Pew Research, broadband adoption is going down, and 65% of people without Internet at home cite cost as the biggest barrier.

## Who is affected by the digital divide?

As more people depend on the Internet for information and essential communications, low-income communities continue to be left behind. While 92 percent of households with incomes between \$100,000 and \$150,000 have broadband service, the adoption rate is only:

- 47% for households with income below \$25,000
- 64% for African Americans and 53% for Latino/as
- 63% for people with disabilities
- 51% for people with limited English proficiency
- 38% for households that prefer Spanish

## But aren't a lot of people accessing the Internet through a smartphone?

Pew Research indicates more people are depending on smartphones for Internet connection, but smartphone access is insufficient and expensive. Tasks such as homework and job applications cannot be completed on a phone. Also, according to a 2015 study by the Pew Research Center, 44 percent of low-income smartphone owners have had to cancel or suspend their service due to financial constraints. And for those whose only access to the Internet is their smartphone, 48 percent have had to cancel or shut off their cell phone for a period of time, because the cost of maintaining the service was a financial hardship.

## What is the homework gap?

Five million school-aged children in the United States do not have an Internet connection at home. A recent study by the Hispanic Heritage Foundation found that nearly 50 percent of students were unable to complete a homework assignment because they lacked Internet access.

## Isn't the internet more of a luxury?

Affordable and reliable Internet access can no longer be considered a luxury. Full participation in our society is a right that should be available to everyone. In its National Broadband Plan, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) says:

Broadband is a platform for social and economic opportunity. It can lower geographic barriers and help minimize socioeconomic disparities—connecting people from otherwise disconnected communities to job opportunities, avenues for educational advancement and channels for communication.