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Let's Connect Georgia

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY PLAN

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1   Executive summary

On behalf of the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB), the Eligible Entity for the State of Georgia, the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) is pleased to present this Digital Connectivity Plan (the Plan). This Plan includes all 15 requirements outlined in NTIA's State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). For more information, see Appendix H: Digital Equity Act requirements.

The Digital Connectivity Plan serves as Georgia's foundational framework for addressing the digital divide, developed in strict compliance with the Digital Equity Act of 2021 and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, Public Law 117-58, 135 Stat. 429. Spearheaded by GTA, this Plan is a collaborative effort involving a broad network of stakeholders, termed the "State Collective."

The Plan aligns with the federal framework for state digital equity plans. Its mission is to break down barriers to digital connectivity within Georgia by focusing on multiple facets of digital connectivity. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring broadband technology is both available and affordable, promoting digital literacy, enhancing cybersecurity awareness, and ensuring affordable access to consumer devices and technical support.

Serving multiple roles, Georgia's Digital Connectivity Plan not only aims to establish and track measurable objectives for digital equity, but also places these goals in the broader context of economic development, workforce training, public health, educational outcomes, and civic engagement.

> *The term "State Collective" is used to describe the cooperative involvement of state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, community groups, and private-sector participants. "State Collective" is not a formal entity, but a descriptor for the group of partners committed to the Plan's implementation.*
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> *When we say "we" and "our" in the context of this Plan, we refer to the shared objectives and aspirations of the diverse members of the State Collective. In other words, this is "our plan," co-created and collaboratively implemented.*

The Plan is designed to be a living document, evolving to meet both current and emerging digital needs. We are committed to annual reviews led by GTA in consultation with the State Collective, ensuring that our strategies and actions stay current and effective.

1.1   Vision for digital connectivity

Our vision for a fully connected Georgia is to ensure that every Georgian has reliable and affordable access to the internet along with the necessary tools and skills that unlock

opportunities for educational advancement, economic success, improved health, and strengthened social ties. This will create more connected, resilient, and prosperous communities and cultivate an environment across the state where our workforce can thrive, our infrastructure can support growth, and our industries can continue to succeed.

In that envisioned future, all Georgians will have access to the following **five critical elements of digital connectivity:**

1. Access to affordable, reliable internet connectivity at home and in their community

2. A computing device and the opportunity to maintain it

3. The opportunity to learn and apply digital skills

4. Tools and practical knowledge for safe online engagement

5. Accessible and usable online government and community resources for all abilities

To achieve this vision, we will adopt the following framework principles for our digital connectivity efforts:

1. Targeted impact on key populations for statewide growth

2. Collaborate and strengthen our partnerships

3. Build on existing achievements and collaborations

4. Prioritize data and rigorous information gathering

5. Smart growth and lasting impact

Georgia's digital connectivity vision and principles guide all digital connectivity efforts outlined in this Plan. These efforts, as shown in Figure 1, include identifying barriers to digital equity for covered populations, developing broad but achievable goals, designing strategies that guide implementation activity and measurable objectives to measure progress, and ensuring alignment with state priorities.

Figure 1. Georgia Digital Connectivity Framework
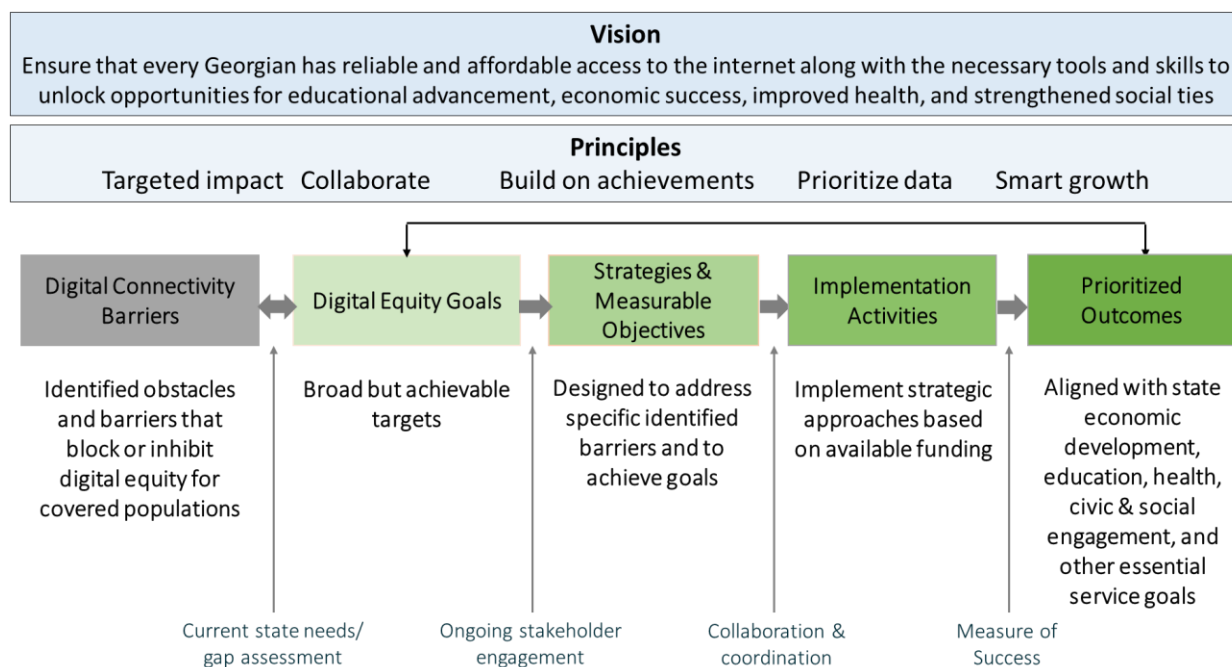
1.2 Current state of digital connectivity: barriers and assets

The most significant barrier to digital connectivity in Georgia is the lack of physical infrastructure for delivering broadband services. In rural parts of the State, in particular, the infrastructure is often weak or lacking. Many rural Georgians thus do not have the opportunity to use the internet at home; in some cases, they also cannot access the internet at their places of work or at community anchor institutions (CAIs) that serve their communities. However, it is not just rural areas that face this problem. Even in metropolitan areas, there are pockets where the infrastructure is inadequate, resulting in limited access to the internet. For that reason, this Plan prioritizes extension of broadband infrastructure as the most important element of ensuring digital connectivity, both in rural and metropolitan areas.

A second crucial barrier to digital connectivity in Georgia is affordability. Many Georgians struggle to afford access to the internet (i.e., service); many also struggle to afford a computing device. The cost of technical services to support those devices is yet another affordability concern. For this reason, this Plan recognizes affordability as a key priority for digital connectivity.

A third barrier to Georgia's digital connectivity vision is that some residents lack foundational digital skills. For example, they may find it challenging to navigate online platforms like the Georgia Gateway for health and social services, renew their driver's license through the Department of Driver Services website, or manage their Social Security benefits online. These skills are essential not only for internet navigation but also for ensuring their privacy and security.

Given these challenges, this Plan prioritizes skills training as a key aspect of the State's digital connectivity efforts.

1.3   Collaboration and stakeholder engagement

GTA developed a strategy to engage a fully diverse and comprehensive set of stakeholders throughout the State of Georgia. GTA's approach to collaborating with key constituencies and partners has been inclusive, extensive, and transparent. At each stage of planning and engagement, GTA has implemented several strategies to ensure that the State's broadband and digital connectivity goals are inclusive and feedback driven.

Ongoing initiatives range from community roundtables and regional planning sessions to a statewide symposium, each tailored to meet the unique needs of covered populations.[1] The Digital Connectivity Advisory Committee (DCAC) is pivotal in offering guidance and facilitating community involvement through their networks.

Our strategic approach prioritizes the creation of a statewide consortium to facilitate cross-sector collaboration, thereby maximizing the utilization of statewide resources to establish a robust infrastructure for digital connectivity. This effort is pivotal in integrating diverse populations into the unified economic landscape that has evolved alongside our nation's infrastructure—from waterways to railroads, the interstate highway system pioneered by President Eisenhower, and now to the paramount high-speed internet. This digital infrastructure is fundamental not only for commerce and trade but also for critical services and opportunities. It serves as the contemporary avenue for essential activities such as telemedicine consultations, emergency communications during crises, and the submission of numerous college applications, connecting communities from College Park to Vidalia within the digital age.

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[1] Covered populations are defined in the Internet Infrastructure and Jobs Act, Section 60301 et seq. (known as the Digital Equity Act of 2021) as: "(A) individuals who live in covered households; (B) aging individuals; (C) incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility; (D) veterans; (E) individuals with disabilities; (F) individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who (i) are English learners; and (ii) have low levels of literacy; (G) individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group; and (H) individuals who primarily reside in a rural area." "Internet Infrastructure and Jobs Act, Section 60302 (Definitions), paragraph 8," Congress, https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3684/text. Covered households are those for which "the income of which for the most recently completed year is not more than 150 percent of an amount equal to the poverty level, as determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census." "Internet Infrastructure and Jobs Act, Section 60302 (Definitions), paragraph 7," Congress, https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3684/text. For the definition of "aging individuals," the statute uses the definition of "older individual" as "an individual who is 60 years of age or older" from the United States Code. "42 U.S.C. Section 2003, paragraph 40," Findlaw, https://codes.findlaw.com/us/title-42-the-public-health-and-welfare/42-usc-sect-3002.html.

Complementing these foundational efforts is a targeted outreach strategy that includes awareness campaigns and storytelling projects that highlight real-world digital experiences. A specialized insights portal will be a central online hub for data and resources.

Our comprehensive collaboration and outreach strategy outlined in this Plan presents a solid framework for enabling broadband adoption and engaging the perspectives of diverse stakeholders. The strategy is further strengthened by numerous partnerships among government agencies, community organizations, and educational institutions, all working toward promoting digital connectivity in line with broader social and economic objectives.

1.4   Strategies, objectives, and key activities for implementation

This Plan sets forth a multi-year, multi-faceted strategy targeting our State's covered populations. We address key challenges such as lack of broadband availability and affordability issues by increasing access to residential broadband infrastructure and partnering with internet service providers (ISP) for better service affordability. Key activities for these strategies include capital projects to extend last-mile broadband, awarding points for connecting CAIs, and educational campaigns for broadband adoption. Furthermore, we are taking innovative approaches to target hard-to-reach communities through public media networks for information dissemination and weighted scoring models to pinpoint areas with layered socioeconomic challenges.

To ensure meaningful digital engagement, key activities also include creating specialized guidebooks and toolkits and a digital skills framework that integrates financial literacy, online safety, and other essential professional skills to supporting youth and adult learners. Special attention is given to communities requiring specialized support, including training Digital Navigators to assist targeted populations, and enhancing the accessibility and awareness of assistive technologies. Additionally, the Plan emphasizes the importance of device ownership and how CAIs and other community-based organizations can be used for device loaner programs.

Our approach ensures no community is left behind by fostering a collaborative ecosystem among state, local, and nonprofit entities. We intend to build local capacity through a statewide consortium, funding local Digital Connectivity Fellows and providing grant writing support. A range of measures have been implemented for sustainability, including efforts to secure additional funding and metrics to assess impact. Overall, the Plan aims to strategically unite various stakeholders to close the digital divide in a measurable, actionable, and sustainable manner.

GTA anticipates the opportunity to use the Digital Equity Capacity Grant to support and develop further digital connectivity capacity in Georgia, aligned with the State's Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) goals to drive broadband availability to all Georgians and in partnership with the many local and regional entities that have participated in GTA's community and

stakeholder engagement work over the past year. This alignment with BEAD efforts is demonstrated through strategies, implementation activities, and objectives that measure progress in achieving broadband availability and adoption goals as a critical component of the State's overall digital connectivity strategy.

At the same time, GTA notes that the ability to develop and sustain these initiatives is dependent on the availability of resources and the many other priorities policymakers have for those resources. For that reason, these potential initiatives are offered as examples of what may be possible if resources are available.

Consistent with its longtime efforts to expand broadband, GTA has designed these initiatives in the most pragmatic way possible—to be actionable, measurable, and sustainable—rather than risk designing more ambitious initiatives that are not financially or practically actionable.

2   Introduction and vision for digital connectivity

Digital connectivity refers to the inclusive availability and access to digital technology and internet services, enabling individuals and communities to participate in, engage, and benefit from the modern digital world. This concept emphasizes the provision of appropriate tools, resources, and support, ensuring that all individuals—regardless of background or circumstance—have the opportunity to connect and thrive in the digital landscape.

2.1   Vision

2.1.1   Vision statement

Our vision for a fully connected Georgia is to ensure that every Georgian has reliable and affordable access to the internet along with the necessary tools and skills to unlock opportunities for educational advancement, economic success, improved health, and strengthened social ties. This will create more connected, resilient, and prosperous communities and cultivate an environment across the state where our workforce can thrive, our infrastructure can support growth, and our industries can continue to lead the way.

In that envisioned future, all Georgians will have access to the following **five critical elements of digital connectivity:**

1. Access to affordable, reliable internet connectivity at home and in their community

2. A computing device and the opportunity to maintain it

3. The opportunity to learn and apply digital skills

4. Tools and practical knowledge for safe online engagement

5. Accessible and usable online government and community resources for all abilities

To achieve this vision, the State of Georgia will adopt the following framework principles for its digital connectivity efforts:

1. **Targeted impact on key populations for statewide growth:** In conjunction with our efforts for statewide broadband expansion, we recognize the need for specialized outreach, support, and investments aimed at "covered populations," as designated by the Digital Equity Act of 2021. These populations include low-income households, aging populations, incarcerated individuals, veterans, people with disabilities, people with language barriers (English learners and individuals who have a low literacy level), racial and ethnic minorities, and rural inhabitants. To optimize impact and ensure efficient use of resources, focused investments will be directed toward initiatives aimed at enabling these populations to participate fully in society and the digital economy. Through this

targeted approach, we can nurture thriving, resilient communities throughout Georgia that are conducive to both economic growth and robust full civic participation for all residents.

2. **Collaborate and strengthen our partnerships:** Digital connectivity work will require collaboration and partnerships. Our community, inclusive of members with lived experiences, regional and local governments, internet service providers (ISPs), workforce organizations, philanthropic entities, corporate partners, community anchor institutions (CAIs), and community-based organizations, will actively partner to solicit ideas, insights, priorities, and lessons learned to strengthen our digital connectivity ecosystem. Together, we will prioritize identifying and addressing gaps to ensure equitable digital access and inclusion across our diverse communities.

3. **Build on existing achievements and collaborations**: As a statewide community, we will leverage and benefit from the efforts of entities that have spent years developing expertise and capabilities in digital connectivity. Rather than attempt to replicate or re-create those capabilities, we will enhance coordination among state agencies, local governments, and nonprofit partners. By sharing timely data, focused support, and helpful resources we aim to align our collective initiatives with established local and regional digital connectivity plans. In this way, the State of Georgia will respect and amplify local and community experience and know-how, working to support its local government and nonprofit partners that have proven capabilities in digital connectivity.

4. **Prioritize data and rigorous information gathering:** Data will be our guide for informed and impactful actions. Through our united community, which includes local and regional governments, state agencies, philanthropic organizations, and the private sector, we recognize the value in using data as a roadmap for effective action. These entities are encouraged to leverage data to make wise investment decisions, focusing funding on the regions and communities that most urgently require digital access and skills. These efforts will be enhanced by continually gathering, synthesizing, and updating data through tools like the Georgia Broadband Map, periodic surveys, and technical assistance. These synthesized data will guide smart investments in addressing digital connectivity gaps in the communities where our covered populations live and interact.

5. **Smart growth for lasting impact:** Our goal is to support the development of programs that can expand and adapt, ensuring that all Georgians, including our covered populations, remain connected. These programs should be designed for long-lasting impact, aligning with our vision of educational advancement, economic success, and community resilience across Georgia. By thinking forward in this Plan, we are laying the groundwork for prosperous and resilient communities throughout our State.

To achieve this vision, the State of Georgia will aim to reduce barriers to digital connectivity to create conditions that enable all Georgians to equitably access and use the internet.

Access to dependable and affordable internet connectivity is a cornerstone for flourishing communities in Georgia. Our data pinpoint areas of particular concern—most notably, regions with high poverty rates and significant gaps in broadband availability and adoption. Lack of reliable internet connectivity in these areas affects overall quality of life and restricts access to opportunities for educational, economic, and health opportunities for everyone, including small businesses that are vital to local economies. Access to affordable and reliable broadband is a major challenge in rural areas, which limits the availability of digital connectivity programs and services. This makes it difficult for community members to access devices, digital skills training, or digital navigators. To ensure equal access to digital resources and opportunities for all, it is essential to establish digital connectivity programs in these areas. However, the establishment of such programs and services will require further assistance. Urban areas also face diverse challenges to digital connectivity. For example, low-income individuals in urban areas may not be able to afford home internet or own a computer, which limits their ability to participate in online learning or access important services and information. To bridge the digital divide and decrease barriers, it is important to collaborate with local leaders who have an extensive knowledge of their community.

It is important to recognize that strategies needed to address the challenges in rural and urban communities may differ. Therefore, working with local leaders is one way to initiate the process and ensure that everyone has equal access to digital resources and opportunities. Through a collective and collaborative effort, we are committed to accelerating progress in these regions. We will draw upon successful frameworks and provide support for initiatives that have been effective in highly connected urban communities, adapting them to meet the unique needs and opportunities of rural Georgia. This ensures that we not only provide immediate solutions but also build a sustainable digital ecosystem that benefits everyone.

The affordability of broadband services and devices is an additional barrier. Statewide, 22.3 percent of households are living on income that is no more than 150 percent of the federal poverty threshold.[2] These households may find it difficult to afford the costs of broadband subscriptions and necessary hardware, such as computers or tablets. As a result, individuals in these households face restricted access to online education, job opportunities, and crucial government services. This digital divide limits social mobility and access to the benefits of the digital world.

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[2] "Digital Equity Act Population Viewer," NTIA, https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=c5e6cf675865464a90ff1573c5072b42 (accessed September 11, 2023).

Additionally, an hourly housing wage of $24.75 is needed to afford basic housing in Georgia.[3] Coupled with the 15.9 percent of Georgians facing severe housing problems and 14.3 percent living below the poverty line, the financial stressors on families are evident. Such families are likely to prioritize housing and food over internet connectivity. Furthermore, the data collected for this Plan show that digital literacy and skills gaps hinder digital connectivity in Georgia. Nearly a quarter of adults (23.6 percent) have low literacy, and child poverty stands at 19.5 percent. These conditions create a dual-faceted challenge. On one hand, low literacy rates hinder people's ability to interact with essential digital platforms, stunting economic mobility. On the other hand, child poverty not only restricts access to technological devices and broadband but also sets up a home environment where the nurturing of digital skills takes a backseat to more immediate survival needs. This creates a generational cycle of limited digital access and literacy and stifles the long-term potential of our workforce.

The barriers to digital connectivity and affordable access also compromise the ability of Georgians to protect their online security and discern credible information from misinformation. This lack of digital skills leaves individuals susceptible to privacy breaches and exposes them to cyber threats, undermining their full participation in a digital society and economy.

Aging individuals, who make up 20.1 percent of the population, are often hindered by low digital literacy—making them more susceptible to cybersecurity risks and misinformation. English learners, accounting for 5.4 percent of residents, face language barriers that can compound issues of digital literacy. Incarcerated individuals, although only 0.9 percent of the population, face almost insurmountable barriers to digital access and literacy. Their unique circumstances often make them part of the 14.3 percent living below the poverty line, and they are likely to have fewer opportunities for digital literacy training while in correctional facilities.

Addressing these interconnected barriers requires efforts that encompass infrastructure expansion, affordable access, digital skills training, and targeted support for covered populations and underserved communities to ensure that all Georgians can participate fully in the digital economy.

Table 1. Achieving positive outcomes by addressing barriers to connectivity

Desired outcome	Barriers	Positive outcomes for individuals	Positive outcomes for communities
Economic success (mobility and	Affordability, lack of broadband and	Enables access to a wider range of employment through online job platforms, upskilling through	Enables local businesses to operate online stores, utilize digital marketing, and reach

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[3] "Out of Reach: Georgia," National Low Income Housing Coalition, https://nlihc.org/oor/state/ga (accessed September 11, 2023).

Desired outcome	Barriers	Positive outcomes for individuals	Positive outcomes for communities
growth)	device access, online safety concerns	online courses, and increased earning potential through remote work. Creates the ability to manage personal finances through online banking and financial platforms.	global markets. Enables local governments to offer more efficient and accessible online services.
Educational advancement	Affordability, device access, digital literacy, child poverty, accessibility	Enables access to educational resources, remote learning, self-paced learning, tutoring, and digital libraries. Enables skill-building through specialized online courses, certifications, and degree programs. Enhances access to adaptive learning tools tailored for people with disabilities and multilingual educational resources for English learners.	Training programs empower youth and adults, contributing to a more skilled workforce. Schools and community centers can become local hubs for educational resources and digital connectivity. Digital navigators act as educational multipliers, extending the reach of available educational resources and services and ensuring they are well-utilized.
Improved health	Lack of access, affordability	Enhances the ability to schedule appointments online, participate in telehealth consultations, and access critical health information. Use of remote monitoring technologies can improve quality of life and independence for aging and individuals with disabilities.	A healthier community leads to reduced healthcare costs, and telehealth could bring specialized healthcare expertise to local healthcare institutions. Enables improved healthcare accessibility, reducing travel times for routine check-ups and specialized consultations.
Strengthened social ties	Digital literacy, online safety concerns	Access to communities and social media can reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness for aging and individuals with disabilities. Specialized forums and online services can offer emotional support and reintegration assistance for veterans and incarcerated individuals.	Fostering a sense of community through digital means can lead to increased civic participation and social engagement. Enables businesses to strengthen their social ties with the community through online engagement, thereby increasing customer loyalty and local economic stability.

2.1.2 Goals and objectives

Georgia's digital connectivity goals and objectives expand upon—and align with—the following key goals for achieving broadband connectivity stated in [Georgia's BEAD Five-Year Action Plan](#) issued in August 2023:

1. Ensure comprehensive high-speed internet accessibility

2. Empower workforce advancement and economic growth in unserved and underserved communities and population groups through broadband expansion projects

3. Bolster cybersecurity across state networks, foster a cyber-ready workforce, and establish lasting partnerships for collaborative action

4. Reduce obstacles to digital connectivity and foster an environment conducive to economic growth, academic achievement, and improved healthcare outcomes

Guided by these key goals, this Plan underscores a series of overarching goals designed to promote safe and efficient digital connectivity across Georgia. Achieving these goals requires conducting sound financial stewardship, leveraging diverse funding avenues, and fostering public-private partnerships to ensure that every Georgian can responsibly access and utilize online resources to their best advantage. The focal points of our digital connectivity goals are as follows:

1. **Goal #1: Boost broadband internet adoption.** In line with the extensive efforts of recent years, Georgia remains committed to ensuring robust fixed broadband connections are available. Initiatives like the BEAD Program play a pivotal role targeting unserved broadband locations. While we prioritize infrastructure as a foundational step, we simultaneously strive to enhance broadband internet adoption encompassing not only the newly connected areas but also the underserved and areas already with service. Through amplified awareness and by supporting the practical use of the internet within homes and community spaces, we aim for all Georgians, especially our covered populations, to be active and meaningful participants in the digital economy.

2. **Goal #2: Ensure broadband affordability.** Building on Goal #1's emphasis on broadband adoption, we understand that affordability is a tangential yet critical component. As efforts are made to continue to expand broadband infrastructure, particularly with the support of the BEAD program, it is crucial to recognize that accessibility does not always equate to affordability. To truly drive adoption among the covered populations, broadband must be both accessible and affordable. This effort will involve coordination with entities dedicated to enabling eligible households to access federal support programs like the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and Lifeline and as well as building affordability into the scoring and requirements for all broadband grant programs.

3. **Goal #3: Strengthen digital literacy and access to essential tools.** As we collectively strive to foster an environment that unlocks opportunities for educational advancement, economic success, and improved health, we understand that device ownership, robust technical support, and education in digital skills and online safety become ever more crucial. Through collaboration with nonprofit and public partners, the intent is to ensure that every Georgian, particularly low-income residents, aging adults, incarcerated populations, and English learners have the tools and knowledge they require. Digital literacy, as defined by the Digital Equity Act of 2021, means the skills associated with using technology to enable users to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information.[4] Furthermore, recognizing the significance of online safety—especially for our aging population—it is vital to embed online privacy and cybersecurity measures in training programs and organizational protocols. A person with digital literacy skills possesses a variety of skills—technical and cognitive—required to find, understand, evaluate, create, and communicate digital information in various formats, understands the relationship between technology, life-long learning, personal privacy, and stewardship of information, and uses these skills to actively participate in civic society and contribute to a vibrant, informed, and engaged community.[5] The goal is not just to overcome technological and economic barriers, but to help individuals navigate both the opportunities and the potential pitfalls of the online world with confidence and competence.

4. **Goal #4: Expand accessible and inclusive digital opportunities**. In Georgia, ensuring every resident, especially those with disabilities and English learners, can efficiently access public resources and services is a paramount commitment. As the availability of assistive technology (AT) and software programs is promoted across workplaces and communities, these provide the necessary tools for more active participation in our digital economy. Our goal is to ensure state and local agencies have clear guidelines on best practices for website design, rooted in well-established accessibility standards. By transforming our public services where accessibility is not an afterthought but an essential program feature, we can foster a Georgia where digital resources are a gateway to opportunities for all, laying a pathway to inclusivity and equity at every digital touchpoint.

2.2   Alignment with existing efforts to improve outcomes

GTA's role in administering broadband infrastructure development and digital connectivity efforts is fully aligned with state programs and priorities to improve outcomes in economic and

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[4] "Digital Equity Act of 2021." SEC. 60302. <<NOTE: 47 USC 1721.>> DEFINITIONS, 60302(12) https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3684/text.
[5] "Digital Literacy," American Library Association, https://literacy.ala.org/digital-literacy/.

workforce development, education, health, civic and social engagement, and the delivery of other essential services.

In alignment with Governor Brian P. Kemp's goal to be the best state in the nation to live, work, and raise a family regardless of ZIP code, the State of Georgia has increased broadband expansion efforts over the past two years by deploying record levels of funding for projects throughout the State, standing up advisory committees for broadband and digital connectivity, and creating a comprehensive State strategy to chart a path to close the digital divide.[6]

In 2018, the State launched the Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative (GBDI) through the Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act[7] with the goal of delivering broadband services throughout the state to unserved areas without a minimum of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload speeds (25/3) delivered via terrestrial technologies. The initiative is jointly led by GTA and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), which have formed an inter-agency team[8] to coordinate and collaborate with stakeholders in the implementation of the GBDI.[9]

To underscore the importance of local planning for broadband expansion, in 2018 Georgia also began requiring that all communities' comprehensive plans include an element that provides for the promotion of broadband deployment.[10] By the end of 2022, nearly every community in Georgia had updated their plans to include local coverage data, as well as specific goals and strategies for broadband in their jurisdiction.

Cities and counties that have both adopted a comprehensive plan in accordance with this requirement and adopted a Broadband Model Ordinance that streamlines permitting for

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[6] "Georgia Broadband Annual Report 2022," Georgia Technology Authority and Georgia Department of Community Affairs, https://gta.georgia.gov/document/document/2022-broadband-annual-report/download.

[7] Senate Bill 402 https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/52636; enacted through Georgia Code Title 50, Chapter 40, https://broadband.georgia.gov/media/6/download. *See also:* OCGA 50-40, https://law.justia.com/codes/georgia/2021/title-50/chapter-40/.

[8] In addition to GTA and DCA, the five-agency team includes the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD), and the State Properties Commission (SPC).

[9] "Georgia Broadband Deployment Initiative," DCA, https://broadband.georgia.gov/sites/default/files/documents/georgia-broadband-deployment-initiative.pdf.

[10] See, GA Code § 36-70-6 (2022), https://law.justia.com/codes/georgia/2022/title-36/chapter-70/article-1/section-36-70-6/ and GA Code § 50-8-7.1(b)(1) (2022), https://law.justia.com/codes/georgia/2022/title-50/chapter-8/article-1/section-50-8-7-1/, as amended by the 2018 Achieving Connectivity Everywhere (ACE) Act (SB 402), https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/52636. "[T]he governing bodies of municipalities and counties shall provide in any comprehensive plan for the promotion of the deployment of broadband services by broadband services providers" and DCA is required to establish "the promotion of the deployment of reasonable and cost-effective access to broadband services" as a minimum element addressed by comprehensive plans local governments create as part of the coordinated and comprehensive planning process.

broadband projects[11] can apply for a Broadband Ready Community designation from DCA.[12] As of June 2023, 56 communities in the state have received the Broadband Ready designation. Many communities that have not yet been designated as Broadband Ready stated that recognition is a goal, and DCA is providing outreach to directly assist those seeking the designation.

A community seeking the Broadband Ready designation has identified the need for expansion of broadband services in their community and is interested in promoting these needs to homes and businesses. Broadband Ready Communities recognize that high-speed internet is critical infrastructure for their community. They prioritize the need for expansion, incorporate the need for broadband into their goals and strategies, and promote themselves as "expansion ready."

The following subsections describe how the strategies in this Plan align with the State's priorities across the outcomes of economic and workforce development, education, health, civic and social engagement, and the delivery of other essential services as they apply to each covered population.

2.2.1   Economic and workforce development goals, plans, and outcomes

Governor's Strategic Goals

Governor Kemp's strategic goals for Georgia are aligned with this Plan's focus on supporting the diverse needs of covered populations. The Governor's priority to Strengthen Rural Georgia by increasing rural broadband access is a pivotal step towards enhancing economic growth, educational opportunities, and healthcare access in rural communities. This initiative directly benefits rural residents, addressing crucial digital divides and enabling their fuller participation in the digital economy.

In tandem, the Plan's emphasis on developing a digitally skilled workforce aligns with Governor Kemp's priority to make "Make Georgia #1 for Small Business by developing a skilled workforce to meet current and future needs across the industry spectrum." This goal is also crucial for veterans and low-income individuals, as it focuses on developing a skilled workforce, ensuring these groups have access to training and employment opportunities in various industries. This approach bolsters small businesses and contributes to overall economic development, ensuring that Georgia remains competitive and forward-thinking in a rapidly evolving global market.

Additionally, Governor Kemp's priority of reforming state government, through expanding public-private partnerships and leveraging technology, intersects significantly with the needs of

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[11] Available at https://gta.georgia.gov/broadband/support-local-governments; if DCA receives an application inclusive of an adopted ordinance that does not follow the model ordinance, the application will be made available for a public comment period of at least 30 days after such an application is received.

[12] "Support for Local Governments," GTA, https://gta.georgia.gov/broadband/support-local-governments (accessed March 10, 2023).

aging populations and individuals with language barriers. These initiatives aim to enhance the accessibility and efficiency of government services, making them more user-friendly and navigable for covered populations such as English language learners, low literacy, and aging individuals. This approach complements the Plan's focus on ensuring that government and community resources are accessible and usable for all abilities, fostering a more inclusive digital environment.

Furthermore, the Governor's commitment to "Put Georgians First," particularly in combating gang activity and human trafficking, aligns with the Plan's emphasis on online safety. This focus is crucial for protecting vulnerable communities, including low-income individuals, ethnic and racial minorities, and those with disabilities, from the dangers prevalent online. By improving online safety skills, the Plan creates a more informed and vigilant population capable of recognizing and responding to such threats. This is especially pertinent given Atlanta's identification as a high-risk city for human trafficking. The Governor's plan to expand access to quality healthcare and mental health resources further supports this initiative, catering to a broad spectrum of the population, including veterans and incarcerated individuals, and ensuring their overall well-being.

The goals and strategies outlined in this Plan actively enhance Governor Kemp's strategic objectives, addressing key areas like broadband expansion in rural areas, workforce development through digital skills training, improved access to government services, and enhancement of online safety. This alignment ensures Georgians from covered populations are empowered to contribute to and benefit from Georgia's economically vibrant community.

State Broadband Strategy

Since 2019, GTA and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) jointly submit the Georgia Broadband Annual Report, which highlights the efforts of the State broadband program in support of Governor Kemp's goal to be the best state in the nation to live, work, and raise a family regardless of ZIP code. The most recent (2022) report highlighted the State's deploying record funding for projects to increase broadband expansion efforts throughout the State and creating a comprehensive State strategy to chart a path to close the digital divide. The report outlines the following program objectives:

1. Bridge the broadband gap in the most cost-effective, timely way possible. Specifically, the State seeks to optimize the cost and time to implement a statewide broadband strategy to avail high-speed, reliable internet service to Georgia's households, businesses, and institutions.

2. Enable sustainable, reliable, and affordable broadband service to end users.

3. Increase the impact of capital investments by expanding internet usage for remote education, telehealth, small business operations, agriculture, and telework.

4. Achieve government objectives for public safety, emergency response, and modern and efficient government administration and customer service with reliable broadband connectivity statewide.

5. Ensure safe and effective end user experiences through digital literacy.

6. Establish workforce development programs to support future broadband expansion efforts, maintenance, and technical support.[13]

DCA's Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026 underscores its commitment to working with GTA and State agencies to support economic and community development in rural areas of the State through broadband deployment, noting it as part of its objective to "strengthen rural Georgia" in alignment with the Governor's Strategy Goals.[14]

In addition to the strategic objectives highlighted in the Georgia Broadband Annual Report and the DCA Strategic Plan, a pivotal component of Georgia's broadband expansion is its direct impact on job creation for rural residents. By enhancing broadband access in rural areas, the State is actively fostering an environment ripe for economic growth and employment opportunities. Improved internet connectivity opens multiple avenues for rural job creation. It attracts new technology-based businesses to these areas, providing local employment opportunities. Existing rural companies can leverage this connectivity to expand their operations and market reach, potentially increasing their need for a larger workforce.

Furthermore, the enhanced internet access enables more rural residents to engage in telework and remote employment opportunities, previously inaccessible due to limited connectivity. This initiative also nurtures entrepreneurship, encouraging rural residents to establish online businesses and create new jobs. Thus, the State's focused efforts on expanding rural broadband access are a critical step towards technological advancement and creating a more vibrant and economically diverse rural Georgia.

Public Service Commission

In support of rural broadband expansion in the State under the larger objective of supporting economic development opportunities and other outcomes including health, education, and quality of life, the Georgia Public Service Commission aids Georgia's Electric Membership Corporations (EMC) and other ISPs to rural Georgians through the review of EMC cost allocation

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[13] 2022 Broadband Report, available from GTA website, https://gta.georgia.gov/broadband/additional-resources.
[14] Georgia Department of Community Affairs Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, submitted to OPB.

manuals for compliance.[15] By doing so, the PSC makes it easier for broadband services to be extended to rural residents, which make up 34.6 percent of Georgia's population.

Appalachian Region

Georgia's involvement in the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is managed by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), which provides technical and project development assistance for local governments and other eligible organizations. Georgia's Appalachian Region encompasses 37 out of 159 Georgia counties throughout the northern part of the State and spans five State regional commission districts.

In the State's 2023 Strategy Statement to the ARC, Governor Kemp highlighted increased access to broadband capacity across rural Georgia as one of five top priorities for the State, with other the priorities of spurring small business, preparing a ready workforce and removing barriers to employment, strengthening rural Georgia, and improving the quality of and access to healthcare options in rural Georgia closely benefiting from improvements in broadband access.[16]

The ARC has shown its commitment to promoting digital equity by launching the Appalachian Digital Equity Accelerator (ADEA) project. ARC has granted $6.3 million through its Appalachian Regional Initiative for Stronger Economies (ARISE) funding opportunity to Connect Humanity. The project aims to assist 50 underserved communities across all subregions of Appalachia, including Georgia's counties, to develop comprehensive digital equity master plans. These tailored plans, each designed to address the unique needs and challenges of the covered population in the respective communities, enhancing the overall economic development.

Economic Development

The Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) has various initiatives to enhance opportunities for covered populations. One of these programs is Georgia Quick Start, which provides specialized training in industries such as business operations, advanced manufacturing, automotive, and bioscience/healthcare. They use state-of-the-art technology to deliver the most appropriate training methodologies. This program unlocks opportunities to equip low-income individuals, veterans, English learners, rural residents, and other covered populations with the necessary skills required in the current workforce, which enhances their job prospects and economic stability.

Another significant initiative is the Electric Mobility and Innovation Alliance (EMIA), which positions Georgia as a leader in the electric mobility sector. EMIA creates partnerships across government, industry, and academia to advance Georgia's role in this innovative field. It attracts

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[15] Georgia Public Service Commission Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, submitted to OPB.
[16] State of Georgia 2023 State Strategy Statement to the Appalachian Regional Commission: https://www.arc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Georgia-State-Strategy-Statement-FY2023.pdf.

new business and investments, opens employment opportunities, and stimulates innovation in electric vehicle technology and battery development, which also offers diverse career paths for rural residents, ethnic and racial minorities, veterans, and other covered populations.

Georgia WorkSmart, an initiative by the GDEcD, promotes work-based learning to support workforce development in Georgia, with a key focus on the Registered Apprenticeship training model. In partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship and the Technical College System of Georgia, the initiative helps organizations develop apprenticeship programs that meet their hiring needs and incorporate classroom instruction and can help with national apprenticeship registration.[17] Occupations approved by the U.S. Department of Labor for Registered Apprenticeships include technology-related careers such as Information Security Analyst and Software Developer.[18] This initiative unlocks enhances job prospects for all covered populations, with an emphasis on ow-income individuals.

Additionally, the Georgia Council for the Arts (GCA), through the GDEcD, contributes significantly to Georgia's cultural and economic development. The GCA drives tourism, supports arts education, creates jobs, and enriches local identities, fostering vibrant communities. This supports covered populations as it promotes civic engagement, community revitalization and skills development for all covered populations.

Furthermore, the film and entertainment industry, led by the GDEcD, is a significant economic driver in Georgia. It generates substantial revenue and job opportunities and serves as a platform for diverse cultural narratives. It provides employment and opportunities, enabling ethnic and racial minorities, veterans, and others to participate in and benefit from this dynamic sector.

In summary, the GDEcD initiatives, through programs like Georgia Quick Start, EMIA, Georgia WorkSmart, and the GCA, enhance digital connectivity through economic and workforce development.

Workforce Development

A key objective of the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) for FY2023-FY2026 is to "utilize cutting edge technology that supports effective and efficient service delivery."[19] GDOL plans to update its legacy unemployment insurance (UI) Benefits, Tax, and Appeals systems to a new web-enabled solution by the close of FY2026 and completed upgrades in September 2023 to various aspects of its operations, such as its call center and website, to improve customers' access to GDOL resources. GDOL also plans to implement a Distance Learning Program in eight rural career

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[17] "Georgia WorkSmart," Georgia Department of Economic Development, https://www.georgia.org/georgia-worksmart.
[18] "Occupation Finder," Apprenticeship.gov, https://www.apprenticeship.gov/apprenticeship-occupations.
[19] Georgia Department of Labor Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, submitted to OPB.

centers, which will make training from GDOL and partners available remotely to rural residents and other covered populations in the areas.

Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education

The mission of the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) Office of Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) is to "educate Georgia's future workforce by providing experiences for Georgia students that will prepare them for workplace success."[20] CTAE "Career Clusters"— "career pathways" of sequenced courses approved by the State Board of Education which may be supplemented by internship, Youth Apprenticeship, or Work-Based Learning courses—include Information Technology and Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM).[21] CTAE's Economic and Workforce Development team works with industry, education, and state agency partners to "better align CTAE coursework" and manage partnerships "through a shared vision to create a pipeline of future world-class workers that are all educated right here in the public classrooms of our home state." [22] CTAE is a key enabler for youth from all covered populations to achieve career goals.[23]

Youth Reentry

As part of its reentry services, the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) partners with local businesses to offer career opportunities for youth supervised in the community in transition from incarceration. The F.R.E.S.H (Focusing Resources Effectively to Sustain Hope) Start Youth Initiative relies on collaborative partnerships with business and community leaders to "facilitate[e] youth's connections to services and support" and access to employment as they transition out of the DJJ system.[24]

Table 2. Economic development outcomes

Key agency partners	Plan / strategy	Key relevant goals / priorities	Digital connectivity strategic alignment	Primary covered populations impacted
Office of the Governor	Governor's Strategic Goals for Georgia	• Increase rural broadband access for economic growth, educational	• Increase access to residential broadband infrastructure	All covered populations, with emphasis on low-income and rural

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[20] "Preparing All Students for College, Career, and Life: A Vision for Georgia's Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education Program FY2019-FY2023," GaDOE, https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/Documents/CTAE-Strategic-Plan.PDF.

[21] "Career Clusters and Pathway Courses," GaDOE, https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/Pages/cluster-pathway-courses.aspx.

[22] "Economic and Workforce Development," GaDOE, https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/Pages/workforce.aspx.

[23] "CTAE Delivers: 2021-2022 Annual Report – Additional Data," https://ctaedelivers.org/additional-data.

[24] "F.R.E.S.H. Start Youth Initiative," DJJ, https://djj.georgia.gov/fresh-start-youth-initiative-0.

Key agency partners	Plan / strategy	Key relevant goals / priorities	Digital connectivity strategic alignment	Primary covered populations impacted
		opportunity, and healthcare access	• Expand collaborative efforts as broadband progresses	
GDEcD	Strategic Plan FY 2023-FY 2026	• Increase number of engagements with businesses • Catalyze economic development through the arts • Educate rural communities on arts for economic development • Promote work-based learning	• Expand collaborative efforts as broadband progresses • Leverage digital connectivity to empower opportunities for workforce and economic advancement • Empower community organizations for comprehensive digital literacy	All covered populations, with emphasis on low-income and rural
GTA, DCA	2022 Broadband Annual Report	• Increase broadband availability	• Increase access to residential broadband infrastructure • Build collaboration among state, local, and nonprofit entities • Sustain and grow state and local efforts in digital connectivity	All covered populations
GPSC	2023-2026 Strategic Plan	• Increase economic growth in Georgia by improving utility infrastructure for businesses	• Increase access to residential broadband infrastructure	All covered populations
ARC, DCA	2023 Strategy Statement to ARC	• Increase community and economic development through reliable broadband internet and other necessary public infrastructure	• Increase access to residential broadband infrastructure • Expand collaborative efforts as broadband progresses • Leverage digital connectivity to empower opportunities for workforce and economic advancement • Empower community organizations for comprehensive digital literacy	All covered populations, with emphasis on rural
GDOL	2023-2026 Strategic Plan	• Connect job seekers quickly and efficiently with available resources for career goals	• Develop a foundational digital skills framework • Leverage digital connectivity to empower opportunities	All covered populations, with emphasis on low-income and rural

Key agency partners	Plan / strategy	Key relevant goals / priorities	Digital connectivity strategic alignment	Primary covered populations impacted
		• Utilize cutting-edge technology for effective employment service delivery • Implement a distance learning / job training program in rural counties	for workforce and economic advancement • Train Digital Navigators specialized in assisting covered populations	
GaDOE	CTAE website	• Career focused education and technical skills to all students	• Career and technical skills development to youth from covered populations	Youth from all covered populations except aging individuals
DJJ	DJJ website	• Provide career opportunities for youth	• Career and technical skills development to youth from covered populations	Youth from all covered populations except aging individuals, with a focus on incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals

2.2.2 Educational outcomes

K-12 schools

In alignment with the Governor's priority of "putting students first," the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE)'s Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026 sets an objective to expand educational opportunities and non-academic supports to meet student needs and maximize engagement.[25] As part of this goal, the GaDOE Office of Rural Education will provide free Georgia Virtual School seats to identified students in rural areas to remediate or accelerate their learning. The Virtual School, a program of the Office of Technology Services, offers students across the state access to courses at the middle school and high school level—including core content areas, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, electives, and more—through a virtual classroom environment.[26] In addition, GaDOE's CTAE office, mentioned in Section 2.2.1, provides structures for student school-to-work success. GaDOE also has developed digital literacy standards within its computer science standards.[27]

GaDOE oversees federal educations including Title I for improving academic achievement for students who are economically and educationally disadvantaged, Title III language instruction for

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[25] Georgia Department of Education Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, submitted to OPB.
[26] Georgia Virtual School, https://www.gavirtualschool.org/.
[27] Computer Science – Georgia Standards for Excellence, https://www.georgiastandards.org/Georgia-Standards/Pages/Computer-Science.aspx.

English learners and immigrant students, and others that directly support students from covered populations.[28] It also has georgiansights.gadoe.org, which allows Georgia's local school districts and schools to better understand, through free and reduced lunch data, the estimated number of families within the county or district that are eligible to home internet and technology subsidies through ACP.

The Governor's Office of Student Achievement

The Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) supports accountability and transparency through strategic data use and collaboration with education stakeholders to advance student success.[29] GOSA programs and resources that can inform digital connectivity efforts include educational and workforce longitudinal data, The Georgia Council on Literacy, and literacy resources.[30]

University System of Georgia

The University System of Georgia's (USG) Strategic Plan 2024 lays out four primary goals: 1) Student success, 2) Responsible stewardship, 3) Economic competitiveness, and 4) Community impact. Of these, student success and economic competitiveness take strategic approaches that rely on digital connectivity.

As a key part of its goal of student success, which involves providing adequate access to higher education wherever and whenever a student needs it, USG will expand its distance education opportunities by expanding its eCampus online education offerings and overhauling its Georgia ONmyLINE to help expand use of online courses and programs offered by USG institutions, of particular benefit to students in rural areas.[31] However, this is just part of USG's goal to support access to educational opportunities regardless of location.

> "USG is also expanding virtual instruction across the State. Development of more classrooms configured to support virtual instruction provides a cost-effective means to deliver needed undergraduate and graduate programs throughout Georgia. This allows students to take advantage of academic programs on other USG campuses without having to leave their community. In addition, we are researching how the Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS), a unit of USG, can help support citizens' access to lifelong educational opportunities. GPLS already supports access to information for all Georgians through libraries across the State

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[28] "Federal Programs, GaDOE, https://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Pages/default.aspx.

[29] "The Governor's Office of Student Achievement," https://gosa.georgia.gov/.

[30] "Georgia Literacy Resources," GOSA, https://gosa.georgia.gov/resources/georgia-literacy-resources.

[31] University System of Georgia Strategic Plan 2024, https://www.usg.edu/strategic_plan/assets/strategic_plan/documents/SP2024.pdf.

as well as online resources. Better use of this resource allows USG to increase availability of academic programming to meet citizen and employer needs."[32]

The USG plan recognizes the need for students to have technology literacy. To help achieve its goal of economic competitiveness, USG plans to update the structure and content of its general education curriculum to better prepare students with the skills, knowledge, and experience to be successful. Among the design principles of this update is support for "developing 21st-century skills such as data, technology literacy and being able to work in diverse multi-disciplinary teams."

USG's Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026 also includes a complementary objective to support student success that relies on digital connectivity. Recognizing that "colleges and universities increasingly utilize technological tools to make student success efforts more comprehensive, efficient, real-time and data driven," USG intends to research and identify effective technology solutions to help increase systemwide student retention rates.[33]

Technical College System of Georgia

In its Strategic Plan FY2023-2026, the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) notes an increased demand for online learning opportunities after the Covid-19 pandemic.[34] To support the objective of improving student retention and graduation rates, TCSG plans to continue expanding its eCampus platform, which offers online courses through a "shared resource model" that increases students' access to programs and allows TCSG to share instructional capacity across colleges.[35]

The Plan also notes that advances in technology impact its core mission to "recruit and grow a globally competitive workforce." TCSG designates the high-demand field of cybersecurity as a target area to increase enrollment and plans to create industry-specific "micro-credentialing" programs for cybersecurity that offer short-term training and "provide easier access to education and required documented skills."

While TCSG serves all covered populations in providing access to GED programs, assessments, and technology certifications, key populations served by TCSG include veterans, individuals with low literacy levels, English learners, adult learners, and people living in rural areas.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

The 10 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in Georgia—Albany State University, Fort Valley State University, Paine College, Savannah State University, Clark Atlanta University,

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[32] University System of Georgia Strategic Plan 2024, https://www.usg.edu/strategic_plan/assets/strategic_plan/documents/SP2024.pdf, p. 16.
[33] University System of Georgia Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, submitted to OPB.
[34] Technical College System of Georgia Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, submitted to OPB.
[35] "TCSG eCampus," TCSG, https://www.tcsg.edu/ecampus/.

Interdenominational Theological Center, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine, Morris Brown College, and Spelman College—include both state- and privately-owned institutions that serve members of ethnic and racial minorities as well as other covered populations. Many of these institutions have close ties to the communities in which they are located and four (Albany State University, Atlanta Technical College, Fort Valley State University, and Morehouse School of Medicine) are recipients of U.S. Department of Commerce NTIA Connecting Minority Communities (CMC) grants, which strengthen digital connectivity capacity and programs to students and community members, many of whom are also members of racial and ethnic minorities and other covered populations.[36]

Through its engagement process, GTA has ensured alignment of state digital connectivity goals with efforts under way by HBCUs. Additional digital connectivity information about HBCUs and neighboring communities in Georgia can be found in Appendix J: "Broadband and Digital Equity Community Briefing," Student Freedom Initiative, which includes key findings from the December 2023 Student Freedom Initiative (SFI) report.

Inmate Education

The Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) offers services to incarcerated individuals, including access to academic education, transitional/reentry, and career technical and higher education services.[37] Academic educational areas of focus include obtainment of GED or high school diploma and include supporting services for special education literacy remediation, and English as a Second Language. Higher education and technical training programs are conducted through TCSG, with computer technology among the programs offered.

Table 3. Educational outcomes

Key agency partners	Plan / strategy	Key relevant goals / priorities	Digital connectivity strategic alignment	Primary covered populations impacted
GaDOE	2023-2026 Strategic Plan	• Increase the percentage of high school students ready for enrollment, employment, or enlistment • Provide instructional supports to CTAE teachers	• Develop a foundational digital skills framework • Enhance digital literacy through youth and adult education platforms • Foster online safety and privacy awareness within digital literacy • Sustain broadband affordability	All covered populations, with emphasis on low-income and rural

[36] "Award Recipients, Connecting Minority Communities," BroadbandUSA, https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/funding-programs/connecting-minority-communities/award-recipients.
[37] Inmate Services, GDS, https://gdc.georgia.gov/document/fact-sheets/inmate-services-fact-sheet/download.

Key agency partners	Plan / strategy	Key relevant goals / priorities	Digital connectivity strategic alignment	Primary covered populations impacted
		• Remove barriers for clear post-secondary pathways		
Governor's Office of Student Achievement	Strategic goals	• Promote student success through partnerships, professional development, and rural focus • Connect with students and parents via a two-generation approach • Ensure that Georgia's literacy rates are on a trajectory of improvement	• Enhance digital literacy through youth and adult education platforms • Expand collaborative efforts as broadband progresses • Expand digital literacy through community collaborations • Train Digital Navigators specialized in assisting covered populations • Improve universal design and accessibility in public resources	Multiple covered populations, with emphasis on English learners, individuals with low literacy, and rural
USG	2024 Strategic Plan	• Increase student success and economic competitiveness; develop talent for industry needs; support entrepreneurship; enhance student career development	• Develop a foundational digital skills framework • Enhance digital literacy through youth and adult education platforms	All covered populations
TCSG	2020-2024 Strategic Plan	• Increase student success through online learning opportunities; close the middle skills gap in Georgia; increase integrated education and training opportunities for youth and adult education students	• Develop a foundational digital skills framework • Enhance digital literacy through youth and adult education platforms • Train Digital Navigators specialized in assisting covered populations • Leverage digital connectivity to empower opportunities for workforce and economic advancement	All covered populations, with emphasis on veterans, English learners, individuals with low literacy, and rural
HBCUs	SFI briefing, CMC grants	• Increase student success and economic competitiveness	• CMC grant initiatives aimed at enhancing digital connectivity for covered populations	Members of racial and ethnic minorities and other intersectional covered populations
GDC	Inmate services	• Provide inmate access to education,	• Digital literacy and skills development for	Incarcerated individuals and other

Key agency partners	Plan / strategy	Key relevant goals / priorities	Digital connectivity strategic alignment	Primary covered populations impacted
	profile	reentry, career and technical skill development and other services	educational and career development opportunities	intersectional covered populations, especially English learners, individuals with low literacy and individuals with disabilities

2.2.3 Health outcomes

Public and Community Health

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) sets an objective in its Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026 to "leverage technology to provide long-term cost savings to the State."[38] To advise the Department on public health technology solutions, a chief technology strategy officer joined the DPH team in 2022 through a public-private partnership with the Georgia Institute of Technology. DPH programs serve all covered populations, with key populations including low-income individuals, aging individuals, people living in rural areas, and English learners.

DPH identifies its IT infrastructure capacity as a critical issue in the plan, noting that the Department has "created a significant technical infrastructure with a large number of core legacy data systems." To further its technology-related goals, the Department has planned IT upgrades for several public health systems. DPH also received federal grant funding to implement a unified Electronic Health Record (EHR) system across all county health departments.

Additional objectives in the Strategic Plan incorporate solutions that rely on digital connectivity to deliver services more effectively. To support HIV prevention efforts, DPH plans to increase the number of public health departments that deliver pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) services via telehealth; the Department also intends to improve the "accessibility and usability" of the Georgia Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP), an online database, to support opioid-related overdose prevention and response.

The Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) is committed to "promot[ing] the health and prosperity of its citizens through innovative and effective delivery of quality health care programs." To support this vision, a key objective of the Department's Strategic Plan FY2023-2026 is to continue transitioning its legacy Medicaid Management Information System to the Medicaid Enterprise System Transformation (MEST), a modular solution which the Department

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[38] Georgia Department of Public Health Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, submitted to OPB.

expects to be more agile and provide "increased system integration and functionality" as well as "improved data governance and quality."[39]

Veterans' Services

The Georgia Department of Veterans Services (GDVS) is implementing the Unite Georgia platform, a coordinated care network developed through a partnership with Unite Us,[40] to support its strategic objective of serving veterans holistically through partnerships with community-based organizations.[41] The online platform streamlines connecting veterans to resources beyond the VA claims process.

Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities

The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) notes as a strength that it has embraced technology to administer and provide services in accordance with its mission of "easy access to high-quality care that leads to a life of recovery and independence for the people we serve."[42]

In alignment with the Governor's Strategy Goal to "leverage technology to best utilize limited State resources," DBHDD is also developing online professional development offerings for its staff, including a new a new DBHDD University intranet landing page that will provide easier access to available learning pathways, according to the Department's Strategic Plan FY2023-2026.

Vocational Rehabilitation

The Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA), which "serves Georgians with disabilities to empower them to live independent lives," identifies a need to leverage technology to enhance the delivery of its services in its FY2023-FY2026 Strategic Plan.[43] GVRA plans to implement a new case management system, automate repetitive business processes, and provide technology training for its staff twice per year by July 2025.

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[39] Georgia Department of Community Health Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, submitted to OPB.
[40] "Georgia Department of Veterans Service and Unite Us Team Up to Expand Coordinated Care Network, Streamline Access to Services in Georgia," GDVS news release, November 9, 2022, https://veterans.georgia.gov/press-releases/2022-11-09/gdvs-partners-with-unite-us.
[41] Georgia Department of Veterans Services Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, submitted to OPB.
[42] Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, submitted to OPB.
[43] Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, submitted to OPB.

Table 4. Health outcomes

Key agency partners	Plan / strategy	Key relevant goals / priorities	Digital connectivity strategic alignment	Primary covered populations impacted
GDPH, GDCH	2023-2026 Strategic Plan	• Improve access to health services	• Empower covered populations with digital healthcare skills	All covered populations, with emphasis on low-income, aging individuals, rural, English learners and others facing health access barriers.
GDVS	2023-2026 Strategic Plan	• Improve access to benefits and health services for veterans • Workforce skill development: attract, retain, and grow talent • Serve the needs of aging veteran population • Connect federal, state, and community-based organizations in service ecosystem	• Empower covered populations with digital healthcare skills • Improve universal design and accessibility in public resources • Enhance digital literacy through youth and adult education platforms • Train Digital Navigators specialized in assisting covered populations	All covered populations, with emphasis on veterans, aging individuals, individuals with disabilities, low-income, and rural
DBHDD	2023-2026 Strategic Plan	• Improve access to health services for individuals with disabilities • Build a recovery-oriented, community-based behavioral health system • Improve access to services and supports for intellectual and developmental disabilities • Implement 9-8-8 for crisis services • Develop skilled workforce to meet current and future needs	• Empower covered populations with digital healthcare skills • Improve universal design and accessibility in public resources • Train Digital Navigators specialized in assisting covered populations • Leverage digital connectivity to empower opportunities for workforce and economic advancement	All covered populations, with emphasis on individuals with disabilities, low-income, and rural
GVRA	2023-2026 Strategic Plan	• Improve access to health and workforce training	• Empower covered populations with digital healthcare skills	All covered populations, with emphasis on individuals

Key agency partners	Plan / strategy	Key relevant goals / priorities	Digital connectivity strategic alignment	Primary covered populations impacted
		services for individuals with disabilities	• Enhance digital literacy through youth and adult education platforms • Improve universal design and accessibility in public resources • Train Digital Navigators specialized in assisting covered populations • Empower community organizations for comprehensive digital literacy • Leverage digital connectivity to empower opportunities for workforce and economic advancement	with disabilities, English learners, individuals with low literacy, low-income, and rural

2.2.4 Civic and social engagement

Libraries

One of the core goals of the Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS), according to its Five-Year Plan FY2023-FY2027, is to "ensure equal access to information and technology." The Plan notes that "every GPLS service has its roots in this commitment, not only to public libraries but to the residents of Georgia as a whole."[44] GPLS serves all covered populations.

In FY22 GPLS utilized funding from the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to expand access to lendable technology and virtual services as part of its intent to "provide equitable services to all Georgia public libraries … to ensure all Georgians have access to the same high-quality library programming and services."[45] GPLS ARPA Relief Grants supported technology and digital inclusion projects.[46] Statewide, library visitors

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[44] "Library Services and Technology Act Grants to States Program Five-Year Plan for Georgia's Public Libraries FY2023 - FY2027," submitted by Georgia Public Library Services to the Institute of Museum and Library Services, revised August 17, 2022, https://georgialibraries.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/1.Revised-Georgia-Five-Year-Plan-for-LSTA-FY2023-FY2027-with-Approval-Letter-091422.pdf.
[45] "Library Services and Technology Act," GPLS, https://georgialibraries.org/lsta/.
[46] "FY2022 ARPA Relief Grants," GPLS, https://georgialibraries.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2022-ARPA-Relief-Grants-Infographic-Page.pdf.

logged over 5.26 million Wi-Fi sessions and approximately 3.4 million public computer sessions in FY22.[47]

The online "Georgia Libraries Tech Center"[48] acts a central hub for GPLS technology programs and services available to libraries and their patrons, including Technology Loaner Kits[49] designed to provide hands-on experience with emerging technology products and resources around digital skills and cybersecurity.

The GPLS Statement on Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility, approved in 2021, highlights GPLS values and commitments to its staff, its libraries, and to the public. Key among its commitments to the public, and aligned with the goals of this Plan, GPLS commits "to abiding by the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standard to support universal access to all of our online content."[50]

GPLS also provides the Georgia Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (GLS), a free braille and talking book library service for individuals who are blind or whose physical abilities require the use of books and magazines in audio, braille, or other adapted formats.[51] GLS also has accessible technology devices for check out and use by individuals with disabilities.

Department of Community Affairs

The State of Georgia Consolidated Plan 2023-2027 outlines engagements conducted by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and concern related to internet access and broadband availability as an issue raised in community engagements and focus groups.[52]

Georgia Public Broadcasting

Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB) produces and distributes content across a variety of platforms—including television, radio, and online—to "educate, inform and entertain Georgians and enrich the quality of their lives." This Plan supports and aligns with GPB's Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, particularly its "recommit[ment] to [its] core mission" of providing educational content for the public, serving as a primary provider of digital learning tools for the State's students and teachers, and "using the media we have access to as a way to provide much needed

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[47] "Georgia Public Libraries Snapshot," GPLS, October 2022, https://georgialibraries.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/gpls-library-stats-snapshot-oct-2022.pdf.

[48] Georgia Libraries Tech Center, https://galibtech.georgialibraries.org/.

[49] "Tech Loaner Kits FAQs," Georgia Libraries Tech Center, https://galibtech.georgialibraries.org/emerging/tech-loaner-kits/tlk-faqs.

[50] Georgia Public Library Service Statement on Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility, https://georgialibraries.org/our-values/ (accessed September 5, 2023).

[51] Accessibility, Georgia Library Service for the Blind and Print disabled: https://georgialibraries.org/gls-accessibility/.

[52] State of Georgia Consolidated Plan 2023-2027: https://www.dca.ga.gov/sites/default/files/2023-2027_consolidated_plan_final_v.3.pdf.

services and information to Georgia's many varied communities across the State, including rural and underserved communities."[53] Key covered populations that rely on GPB's programs include aging individuals, low-income individuals, and individuals with disabilities.

Georgia Council on American Indian Concerns

The Georgia Council on American Indian Concerns was created by the Georgia General Assembly and is the only state entity specifically authorized to address the concerns of Georgia's American Indians. It fosters cultural heritage of American Indians in Georgia, advises state and local governments on proposed and existing policy and legislation, state-recognition of Indian groups, tribes and communities in Georgia, and other matters affecting the American Indian community, and assists with American Indian burial and repatriation.[54] Among its major projects, the Council supports a Vocational Rehabilitation Program that assist American Indians with disabilities to find gainful employment, which is aligned with state digital connectivity goals for covered populations.

The State ADA Coordinator's Office

The State ADA Coordinator's Office provides educational and technical support for State agencies so that programs, services, and activities operated by the State of Georgia are accessible and usable by everyone. The Office's team strives to eliminate barriers to content for visitors with disabilities by implementing requirements that allow for a more inclusive, accessible online experience for all individuals. The platform incorporates federally mandated Section 508 compliance standards and best practices recommended by the World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) (Level AA) for web accessibility.[55] As part of its mission to help ensure that State owned facilities meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II "program access" mandate, the Office also provides technical assistance and training to State agencies.[56]

Table 5. Civic and social engagement outcomes

Key agency partners	Plan / strategy	Key relevant goals / priorities	Digital connectivity strategic alignment	Primary covered populations impacted
GPLS	2021 Statement on Inclusion, Diversity,	• Provide accessible content to support needs of diverse communities	• Develop a foundational digital skills framework	All covered populations, with added services for individuals with

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[53] Georgia Public Broadcasting Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, submitted to OPB.
[54] Council, Georgia Council on American Indian Concerns, https://georgiaindiancouncil.com/council.
[55] "Mission, Purpose, and Website Accessibility," The State ADA Coordinator's Office, https://ada.georgia.gov/about-us/mission-purpose-and-website-accessibility.
[56] "Programs, Services, & Initiatives," The State ADA Coordinator's Office, https://ada.georgia.gov/programs-services-initiatives.

Key agency partners	Plan / strategy	Key relevant goals / priorities	Digital connectivity strategic alignment	Primary covered populations impacted
	Equity, and Accessibility		• Foster online safety and privacy awareness within digital literacy • Empower community organizations for comprehensive digital literacy • Improve universal design and accessibility in public resources	disabilities, individuals with low literacy, English learners and people living in rural areas
DCA	Consolidated Plan 2022-2027	• Understand community concern about internet access	• Improve universal design and accessibility in public resources	All covered populations
Georgia Public Telecommunications Commission (GPB)	2023-2026 Strategic Plan	• Educate and inform public; support teachers and students with digital education content; community engagement initiative for GPB education's resources; provide relevant and educational content and services	• Improve universal design and accessibility in public resources • Expand digital literacy through community collaborations • Enhance digital literacy through youth and adult education platforms • Train Digital Navigators specialized in assisting covered populations • Expand collaborative efforts as broadband progresses	All covered populations
Georgia Council on American Indian Concerns	Website	• Foster cultural heritage of American Indians in Georgia and serve as agency to deal with federal programs • Advise state and local governments on matters affecting the American Indian community.	• Vocational rehabilitation for American Indians with disabilities	Members of a racial or ethnic minority, individuals with disabilities, rural
State ADA Coordinator's Office	Website	• Ensure services, and activities operated by the State of Georgia are accessible and usable by everyone.	• Section 508 compliance Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. • Technical assistance to state agencies	All covered populations with emphasis on individuals with accessibility barriers, such as those with disabilities, with low

Key agency partners	Plan / strategy	Key relevant goals / priorities	Digital connectivity strategic alignment	Primary covered populations impacted
				literacy, and English learners

2.2.5 Delivery of other essential services

Emergency Preparedness and Response

To advance its objective of increasing information sharing and collaboration with local agencies and first responders,[57] the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA/HS) utilizes notification and messaging technology and well as secure collaboration platforms—all of which depend on reliable connectivity and are critical for all covered populations, especially those living in rural areas and aging individuals.

GEMA/HS's Strategic Plan for FY2023-FY2026 also prioritizes preparing for the transition to Next Generation 911 (NG-911), and the agency intends to collaborate with GTA and the Georgia Cyber Center, among other partners, to develop best practices around cybersecurity for public safety answering points (PSAP) implementing the technology.

Human Services

The ability to effectively access and use the internet is critical to households that benefit from the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) programs that support workforce development and partnerships, educational needs for Georgia's most vulnerable residents, and empower Georgians to improve their economic, medical, and mental well-being (whether in person or virtually). In addition, as the agency streamlines its service delivery system with a greater utilization of technology, broadband access and digital connectivity skills efforts highlighted in this Plan are key enablers.

Specifically, this Plan supports DHS mission to provide "individuals and families access to services that promote self-sufficiency, independence and protect Georgia's vulnerable children and adults."[58] As a potential enabler for digital connectivity programs, DHS's Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) Community Partners Program gives Georgia Gateway Community Partner portal access to organizations that provide direct community services to the citizens of Georgia to help them apply for benefits. Community partners include faith-based organizations, food banks, non-profit organizations, member organizations, Housing Authorities, and

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[57] Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, submitted to OPB.

[58] Georgia Department of Human Services Strategic Plan, accessed from DHS website, https://dhs.georgia.gov/organization/about/dhs-strategic-plan.

Community Action Agencies. [59] The DHS Division of Aging Services also runs the Senior Community Service Employment Program that helps low-income persons 55 and older enhance their employability.[60]

Key covered populations include low-income individuals and households, aging individuals, individuals with language barriers, and formerly incarcerated individuals.

Transportation

Expanding access to reliable connectivity supports the Georgia Department of Transportation's (GDOT) goal to "deliver [its] mission responsibly and more efficiently" [61] by managing communications with the public through NaviGAtor, GDOT's Advanced Transportation Management System, which residents can access through Georgia 511. GDOT's objectives also include "put[ting] Georgians' safety first through innovation and technology," including deploying connected vehicle technology at traffic signal locations and continuing its statewide traffic signal timing program, Signal Operations (SigOps). Covered populations include people living in rural areas.

Law Enforcement

The Georgia Department of Community Supervision (DCS), in accordance with its approach to "leverag[e] research and technology to prioritize activities that promote success among justice-involved persons," plans to launch a Reentry Online Network platform integrated with its case management system by 2025 to "expand the impact of reentry services throughout the entire state."[62]

The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) also plans to "expand delivery of virtual diversion telecounseling services for low-impact offenders" by 2027.[63] In addition, the DJJ's F.R.E.S.H. program, mentioned in Section 2.2.1 above focuses on access to employment as youth transition out of the DJJ system.

Key covered populations include incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, and other justice-impacted individuals.

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[59] Georgia Community Partners, https://dfcs.georgia.gov/services/georgia-community-partners#:~:text=In%20partnership%20with%20local%20communities,%2C%20and%20self%2Dsufficient%20lives.

[60] Senior Community Service Employment Program, https://aging.georgia.gov/programs-and-services/senior-community-service-employment-program-scsep

[61] Georgia Department of Transportation Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, submitted to OPB.

[62] Georgia Department of Community Supervision Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, submitted to OPB.

[63] Department of Juvenile Justice Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, submitted to OPB.

Parks and Recreation services

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources, which manages parks and historic sites in the state, intends to raise the number of online bookings through FY2026 by improving its online reservation system and increase use of its website and social media to share information with potential visitors. [64] This goal aligns with needs for greater accessibility for all covered populations, especially individuals with disabilities and individuals with language barriers.

Table 6. Essential services outcomes

Key agency partners	Plan / strategy	Key relevant goals / priorities	Digital connectivity strategic alignment	Primary covered populations impacted
GEMA/HS	2023-2026 Strategic Plan	• Improve access to emergency information; develop statewide capacity for equitable and inclusive disaster recovery in rural and economically disadvantaged areas; increase knowledge of FEMA Public Assistance Program through targeted training	• Develop a foundational digital skills framework • Improve universal design and accessibility in public resources • Train Digital Navigators specialized in assisting covered populations	Multiple covered populations, with emphasis on rural
DHS	2023-2026 Strategic Plan	• Improve access to basic human services for covered populations • Build a workforce that supports a strong business environment and small businesses • Strengthen strategic partnerships and utilizing technology to improve service delivery • Increase access to programs and services for covered populations • Promote programs that empower	• Partner with ISPs and community stakeholders for improved broadband affordability and device accessibility • Expand device ownership initiatives • Leverage CAIs to expand community-level device access • Prioritize and prepare for broadband and digital connectivity in counties with highest digital inequities • Develop a foundational digital skills framework	All covered populations, with emphasis on low-income, individuals with low literacy, English learners, and aging individuals

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[64] Department of Natural Resources Strategic Plan FY2023-FY2026, submitted to OPB.

Key agency partners	Plan / strategy	Key relevant goals / priorities	Digital connectivity strategic alignment	Primary covered populations impacted
		Georgians to improve their economic, medical, and mental well-being	• Empower covered populations with digital healthcare skills • Foster online safety and privacy awareness within digital literacy • Expand digital literacy through community collaborations • Empower community organizations for comprehensive digital literacy • Improve universal design and accessibility in public resources • Train Digital Navigators specialized in assisting covered populations	
GDOT	2023-2026 Strategic Plan	• Improve access to transportation services	• Develop a foundational digital skills framework • Improve universal design and accessibility in public resources • Foster online safety and privacy awareness within digital literacy	All covered populations, with emphasis on those living in rural areas
DJJ, GDC, DCS	2023-2026 Strategic Plans	• Increase safety and security in facilities while providing educational opportunities • Expand delivery of virtual diversion telecounseling services • Develop new virtual gang awareness employee onboarding training • Establish effective responses to the needs of human trafficking victims • Utilize technology to improve operational efficiencies	• Develop a foundational digital skills framework • Empower covered populations with digital healthcare skills • Foster online safety and privacy awareness within digital literacy • Empower community organizations for comprehensive digital literacy • Enhance digital literacy through youth and adult education platforms • Expand device ownership initiatives • Leverage CAIs to expand community-level device access	All covered populations, with emphasis on low-income, and incarcerated and justice impacted

Key agency partners	Plan / strategy	Key relevant goals / priorities	Digital connectivity strategic alignment	Primary covered populations impacted
		• Increase and maintain mental health appointment completions • Increase rehabilitative opportunities • Address mental health and addiction needs; expand the use of accountability courts • Launch reentry online network to increase the number of judicial circuits receiving reentry services	• Improve universal design and accessibility in public resources • Train Digital Navigators specialized in assisting covered populations	
DNR	2023-2026 Strategic Plan	• Improve public access to parks	• Improve universal design and accessibility in public resources	All covered populations, with an emphasis on those with accessibility challenges

2.3   Strategy and objectives

This section of the Plan describes, at a high level, the key strategies and objectives of the Plan, which are designed to address the key digital connectivity challenges described below. Additional details regarding how these strategies are implemented and their associated initiatives are provided in Section 5, which details GTA's plans for execution.

Table 7. Key digital connectivity challenges, strategies, and objectives

Challenge	Strategies	Objectives
1. Lack of broadband availability	1.1: Increase access to residential broadband infrastructure 1.2: Expand collaborative efforts as broadband progresses	1.A: Achieve statewide broadband access: every Georgian can access 100/20 Mbps at home. 1.B: Increase broadband subscription statewide through a holistic awareness campaign. 1.C: Spur a significant increase in broadband subscription for Georgians living in counties with highest digital inequities.

Challenge	Strategies	Objectives
2. Low-income households struggle to afford broadband services, devices, and technical support	2.1: Partner with ISPs and community stakeholders for improved broadband affordability and device accessibility	2.A: Boost ACP enrollment. 2.B: Increase the percentage of ISPs with low-cost broadband service offerings. 2.C: Enhance device access for all covered populations through a sustainable device ecosystem. 2.D: Georgians in need can access affordable device options through digital connectivity organizations. 2.E: Increase device loaner programs and public computer labs through CAIs serving covered populations.
	2.2: Establish a device ecosystem	
	2.3: Expand device ownership initiatives	
	2.4: Leverage CAIs to expand community-level device access	
	2.5: Prioritize and prepare for broadband and digital connectivity in counties with highest digital inequities	
3. Covered populations need support to develop digital skills, including skills to protect themselves and their personal data online	3.1: Develop a foundational digital skills framework for all Georgians	3.A: Design and develop a statewide digital skills framework. 3.B: Expand digital literacy through community collaborations. 3.C: Increase digital skills program enrollment and proficiency among covered populations. 3.D: Covered populations in Georgia can effectively use the internet if they so choose. 3.E: Covered populations in Georgia can access information or training to learn how to protect their security and privacy online. 3.F: Enhance digital health literacy in covered populations. 3.G: Enhance workforce development and opportunities in telecom, technology, and broadband-related industries.
	3.2: Empower covered populations with digital healthcare skills	
	3.3: Foster online safety and privacy awareness within digital literacy	
	3.4: Empower community organizations for comprehensive digital literacy	
	3.5: Enhance digital literacy through youth and adult education platforms	
	3.6: Leverage digital connectivity to empower opportunities for workforce and economic advancement	
4. Ensuring digital inclusivity as Georgia advances in digital services	4.1: Improve universal design and accessibility in public resources	4.A: Members of covered populations can access government services online. 4.B: Widen the accessibility and awareness of assistive technology. 4.C: Train and deploy specialized Digital Navigators within community spaces serving covered populations.
	4.2: Train Digital Navigators specialized in assisting covered populations	
5. Local communities lack resources and expertise for digital connectivity efforts	5.1: Build collaboration among State, local, and nonprofit entities	5.A: Establish local digital connectivity plans. 5.B: Establish a statewide digital connectivity consortium. 5.C: Establish a Digital Connectivity Insights Hub. 5.D: Monitor the financial sustainability of digital connectivity efforts.
	5.2: Support and develop local capacity through a statewide consortium	
	5.3: Sustain and grow State and local efforts in digital connectivity	
	5.4: Create a repository of digital connectivity insights	

2.3.1 Strategies

Strategies are organized based on the key challenge they are designed to address (see Section 5 for details).

2.3.1.1 *Key challenge 1:.Lack of broadband availability*

Broadband has far-reaching impacts on Georgia's individuals, communities, businesses, education, healthcare, and overall economic and social development. While broadband has far-reaching impacts, 315,783 unserved households in Georgia still face a lack of broadband availability. State and federal resources will be used to provide robust high-speed internet connections for all Georgians, with a particular focus on the populations most affected by limited service options.

2.3.1.1.1 Strategy 1.1: Increase access to residential broadband infrastructure.

By ensuring every Georgia household has high-speed internet, we unlock opportunities for individuals to access vital resources. This connectivity is a foundation for improved education, healthcare, workforce, essential services, and civic participation. Moreover, enhanced connectivity fosters equitable outcomes in these essential sectors.

2.3.1.1.2 Strategy 1.2: Expand collaborative efforts as broadband progresses.

ISPs are pivotal in expanding the physical networks while CAIs, governments, and other key partners spearhead community-level initiatives. Leveraging both public and private investments, Georgia aims to scale digital connectivity programs and address broadband gaps. As the broadband infrastructure continues to improve, these concerted efforts are directed toward bridging the connectivity gaps across the unserved and underserved locations of Georgia.

2.3.1.2 *Key challenge 2: Low-income households struggle to afford broadband services, devices, and technical support.*

Affordability of broadband services and devices is essential for Georgians to participate in the digital economy, regardless of their financial circumstances. Currently, approximately 22 percent of Georgia's households have incomes no greater than 150 percent of the federal poverty threshold. This economic circumstance translates to digital disconnection, with 18.8 percent of the State's population not utilizing the internet. Furthermore, despite having 1,662,063 households meeting the ACP eligibility criteria as of June 2023, a significant gap is evident with 1,014,346 households still unenrolled in the program. If all eligible were to avail the subsidy, the collective savings could amount to up to $365,164,560 per year. Rechanneling these substantial savings could open opportunities for Georgian households to meet other essential needs, invest in education, or circulate the savings back into the local economy.

2.3.1.2.1 Strategy 2.1: Partner with ISPs and community stakeholders for improved broadband affordability and device accessibility.

GTA acknowledges that it does not possess regulatory authority over broadband pricing. However, by establishing clear compliance criteria for ISPs, especially those receiving State funds for broadband projects, and engaging with community stakeholders, GTA can help to ensure the availability of affordable broadband packages. The State Collective can also provide enrollment assistance to make federal programs like ACP and Lifeline more accessible to eligible households, particularly promoting broader participation and adoption.

2.3.1.2.2 Strategy 2.2: Establish a device ecosystem

Establishing a device ecosystem tailored to the specific technology needs of covered populations involves ensuring a steady flow of affordable devices, complemented by training and technical support services. A dynamic supply chain will be activated, inviting contributions from various suppliers and organizations. Devices will undergo customization with appropriate features and software, followed by distribution through networks that have earned community trust. The management of the device lifecycle will include sustainable practices for donation, upgrading, and recycling.

Central to this strategy is a continuous feedback loop, utilizing data collection and community engagement to continually adapt and refine the approach. Multisector collaboration will be essential in building a resilient ecosystem that can adapt to technological changes, with shared insights and best practices contributing to future digital equity initiatives.

2.3.1.2.3 Strategy 2.3: Expand device ownership initiatives.

Access to large-screen devices like laptops and desktops at home is crucial for maximizing the benefits of broadband. While smartphones serve as a stopgap, they cannot replace the comprehensive capabilities of larger devices, which are especially crucial for students, those with disabilities, and others requiring more complex engagement. Recognizing the challenge faced by low-income households in affording both broadband and essential devices, The State Collective can work with the community's digital connectivity organizations. These organizations distribute devices and other device essentials such as cameras, mice, headphones, and software. They also offer affordable technical support, underscoring the principle that broadband affordability is intrinsically linked to device affordability. By supporting these organizations, we reinforce that both are vital in addressing the broader goal: *affordability is fundamental to the widespread adoption of broadband services.*

2.3.1.2.4 Strategy 2.4: Leverage CAIs to expand community-level device access.

Harnessing the foundational role of CAIs such as libraries, schools, and community centers, the State Collective can strengthen these entities as pillars of device accessibility. By fortifying their digital resources and promoting ready access to device programs (i.e., lending programs and tech kiosks) we seek to provide residents with cost-effective avenues to access current technology, simultaneously fostering an environment of digital literacy and awareness about affordable device ownership options. Through this approach, CAIs are positioned as vital hubs for digital connectivity, ensuring every Georgian can engage with the digital world, irrespective of personal device ownership.

2.3.1.2.5 Strategy 2.5: Prioritize and prepare for broadband and digital connectivity in counties with highest digital inequities.

As we work toward digital connectivity in Georgia, we must direct attention to counties grappling with high levels of digital disparities. While all of Georgia's 159 counties have diverse needs, this comprehensive strategy focuses on counties that showcase heightened digital inequities. This approach considers a variety of critical factors, including the percentage of households unserved by broadband, and the demographic makeup in terms of racial or ethnic minorities, aging populations, low literacy levels, disabilities, rural residency, county health factors, and rates of incarcerated individuals.

The complexity of digital inequity often arises from the intersection of multiple factors. For instance, areas with a high percentage of households unserved by broadband might also suffer from low literacy levels and poor county health outcomes, making full digital connectivity not just a matter of broadband access but a broader socioeconomic imperative. It is imperative to clarify that the targeted focus on these counties does not mean prioritizing them over others. Rather, this targeted strategy is an integral part of our holistic approach to ensure that no county, irrespective of its unique challenges, is left behind in our statewide digital connectivity efforts. By concentrating resources and interventions in these counties, we aim to build a replicable model of success that can be adapted and implemented across all counties in Georgia.

2.3.1.3 *Key challenge 3: Covered populations need support to develop digital skills, including skills to protect themselves and their personal data online.*

Georgia's diverse populations face unique and intersectional challenges when it comes to digital literacy. While digital skills and knowledge are universally essential, the ability to navigate the digital landscape is even more pivotal for covered populations to ensure they are not left behind. This includes both low-income households contending with financial barriers and aging

individuals who must adapt to the increasing digitalization of services, such as healthcare, where they may be at an elevated risk from online threats and fraud.

Digital literacy and skills are not only about using technology but also about fostering empowerment, critical thinking, and participation in the digital society. These skills are instrumental in promoting education, employability, small business and entrepreneurship, healthcare access, financial management, and lifelong learning. Our data paints a vivid picture of these challenges.

In Georgia, 34.6 percent of rural residents face the digital divide, an issue that becomes even more pronounced in the 50 counties where communities, mainly those with high poverty rates exceeding 14 percent, have over 20 percent of locations without broadband access. Furthermore, while our students are the future, an alarming 34 percent of third graders read below grade level, [65] underscoring the essential role digital skills can play in boosting their educational trajectories. By understanding these challenges, we aim to tailor digital skills interventions in a manner that addresses the specific needs of all our covered populations, ensuring no one is left behind.

2.3.1.3.1 Strategy 3.1: Develop a foundational digital skills framework for all Georgians.

To create a universal standard for digital proficiency in Georgia, GTA's Digital Connectivity Advisory Committee alongside inter-agency partners will craft a comprehensive digital skills framework. This blueprint will encompass key competencies including professional digital communication, cybersecurity awareness, digital financial literacy, and information literacy. Recognizing the increasing importance of digital literacy in today's economy, the framework will serve as a guidepost for educational institutions and training centers. Its design will ensure that all Georgians, irrespective of age or socioeconomic background, are well-equipped with essential digital skills, spanning from basic navigation to advanced cybersecurity.

2.3.1.3.2 Strategy 3.2: Empower covered populations with digital healthcare skills.

With healthcare services undergoing rapid digital transformation, there is a pressing need to ensure our covered populations are adept in using these digital tools. Partnerships within the State Collective will be fostered to work with health providers, leveraging their insights to establish tailored telehealth literacy initiatives. By prioritizing areas where in-person medical services might be limited, it bridges a

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[65] See, Reading Status End-of-Grade | Grade 3 | Spring 2023, Georgia Milestones Results Dashboard, Georgia Department of Education, https://georgiainsights.gadoe.org/Dashboards/Pages/Georgia-Milestones.aspx (accessed October 12, 2023).

significant digital and healthcare gap, ensuring better health outcomes for all Georgians.

2.3.1.3.3 Strategy 3.3: Foster online safety and privacy awareness within digital literacy.

GTA and other partners within the State Collective that promote cybersecurity seek to promote a secure and safe online environment for Georgians by integrating digital privacy and cybersecurity modules within digital literacy programs, emphasizing the importance of personal data protection, secure browsing, and phishing threat awareness. This effort should include a layered cyber literacy strategy that provides foundational online safety training for covered populations while also paving a pathway to advanced learning and career opportunities in the cyber sector. This approach acknowledges the dual necessity to guard vulnerable groups against cyber threats and to foster talent and expertise in the cybersecurity field, capitalizing on Georgia's robust resources and achievements in the cyber domain.

2.3.1.3.4 Strategy 3.4: Empower community organizations for comprehensive digital literacy.

Communities are at the heart of fostering digital connectivity. Local organizations will be empowered to champion digital literacy initiatives. By emphasizing multi-generational learning, we will support every member of the community according to their needs, ensuring widespread digital competence. The focus on hybrid and remote learning solutions ensures adaptability, catering to the evolving digital needs of Georgia's diverse populace.

2.3.1.3.5 Strategy 3.5: Enhance digital literacy through youth and adult education platforms.

Acknowledging the unique challenges covered populations face in accessing digital learning resources, career innovation platforms will be utilized. These platforms, tailored for specialized learning needs, will be expanded to encompass digital literacy, ensuring that individuals receive not just knowledge but also the necessary tools, from devices to connectivity.

2.3.1.3.6 Strategy 3.6: Leverage digital connectivity to empower opportunities for workforce and economic advancement.

This strategy aims to leverage digital connectivity to promote workforce development and economic growth by utilizing technology and digital platforms. Digital connectivity plays a central role in modern business operations, allowing for more streamlined operations, cost reductions, and enhanced efficiency. However, the digital skills gap is a significant challenge as over 92 percent of jobs require digital proficiency, yet about

one-third of workers lack foundational digital skills.[66] This gap presents a critical barrier to employment and economic advancement, particularly for covered populations. This will require targeted training programs and strategic partnerships to equip members of the covered populations with essential digital skills, ranging from basic computer literacy to advanced areas like cybersecurity and data analytics.

The strategy will be revisited over time to ensure alignment with the State's workforce plan, anticipating shifts in economic priorities and emerging demands in sectors like healthcare, education, and digital services. By ensuring that the imparted digital skills are relevant and valuable in the evolving job market, we can better prepare our workforce for future challenges and opportunities. This comprehensive approach addresses current needs and paves the way for sustained economic growth and workforce development in the digital economy.

2.3.1.4 Key Challenge 4: Ensuring digital inclusivity as Georgia advances in digital services.

As Georgia surges ahead in the domain of digital services for its constituents, thanks to the significant strides taken by GTA Digital Services, it faces a nuanced challenge of ensuring the inclusivity of all its residents. A deep dive into Georgia's demographics reveals that 12.9 percent of its residents live with a disability, 20.2 percent navigate language barriers, 32 percent are 50 years old and above, and 14 percent are 65 or older. While the State boasts a life expectancy of 77 years, these figures highlight a multifaceted user base with unique digital needs. These demographics underscore the need to ensure that every Georgian, irrespective of age, disability, or language preference, experiences barrier-free access to digital resources. The challenge lies in creating a digital ecosystem that is universally accessible and serves as a bridge to opportunities for all its residents.

2.3.1.4.1 Strategy 4.1: Improve universal design and accessibility in public digital resources.

Georgia stands firm in its commitment to elevate the inclusivity and functionality of its public digital platforms. Universal accessibility is not just an aspiration; it is a foundational pillar that ensures every Georgian, regardless of age or ability, can seamlessly harness online resources.

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[66] "Baseline for work: 92 percent of jobs require digital skills" (2023, August 10). Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. https://www.atlantafed.org/community-development/publications/partners-update/2023/08/10/baseline-for-work-92-percent-of-jobs-require-digital-skills#:~:text=Over%2092%20percent%20of%20all,to%20qualify%20for%20these%20jobs.

2.3.1.4.2 Strategy 4.2: Train Digital Navigators specialized in assisting covered populations.

Georgia stands poised to invest in a network of Digital Navigators, ambassadors of digital literacy, trained to assist English learners and other vulnerable demographics in navigating the digital landscape with adeptness. Their role becomes pivotal in removing language barriers and nurturing skills that empower individuals to leverage online resources efficiently, unlocking avenues previously inaccessible, and paving the path toward a digitally fluent Georgia.

2.3.1.5 Key challenge 5: Local communities lack resources and expertise for digital connectivity efforts.

Georgia's commitment to digital connectivity means a significant commitment of resources to sustain the initiatives contemplated in this Plan and to support local communities, nonprofits, and CAIs to develop local capacity. To sustain these efforts over time, Georgia will require resources beyond that provided by the Digital Equity Capacity Grant program. The focus will be on developing a strategy for continuing the work launched under this Plan by partnering with philanthropic organizations to seek other funding sources, and by tracking the impact of Georgia's digital connectivity efforts to quantify the business case for further investment in digital connectivity programs.

2.3.1.5.1 Strategy 5.1: Build collaboration among State, local, and nonprofit entities.

Unite the efforts of State agencies, regional planning commissions, local governments, and nonprofit organizations to create a cohesive digital connectivity framework and to support the development of local digital connectivity plans. Together, we will harness Georgia's vast resources and leverage the expansion of high-speed, reliable internet access for all.

2.3.1.5.2 Strategy 5.2: Support and develop local capacity through a statewide consortium.

Facilitate the formation and nurturing of a digital connectivity consortium that brings together diverse stakeholders. This consortium will serve as a platform for regular convenings, fostering collective efforts to gather and analyze data, address existing digital gaps, and capitalize on emerging digital opportunities. Central to this strategy is co-creating solutions that leverage the unique strengths and perspectives of each stakeholder.

2.3.1.5.3 Strategy 5.3: Sustain and grow state and local efforts in digital connectivity.

Support the sustainability and growth of local programs that provide digital skills training, device access, technical assistance, digital navigation, and support for workforce, economic, and community development. This effort focuses on enabling

communities to address gaps and prepare for future opportunities by providing technical assistance, grant writing expertise, and professional development opportunities for key leaders and staff. Additionally, we will facilitate access to current data and insights on the covered populations to ensure that localities are best positioned to make a compelling case for funding and to maximize the impact of these resources in increasing digital connectivity.

2.3.1.5.4 Strategy 5.4: Create a repository of digital connectivity insights.

As we prioritize high-speed, reliable broadband for all Georgians, we will harness actionable data to thoroughly understand Georgia's digital connectivity landscape. This helps identify gaps, spot funding and research opportunities, and adapt to technological shifts in education, workforce, and other key sectors.

2.3.2 Measurable objectives and key performance indicators

We have collaborated with key stakeholders to develop measurable objectives and key performance indicators (KPI) to address Georgia's digital connectivity barriers. We aim to ensure that the 9,046,000 (85.2 percent) Georgians in a covered population can access digital connectivity tools, resources, and knowledge to meet their needs. We have also considered the needs of State-recognized tribes as an additional covered population, ensuring that their concerns are addressed alongside those of other groups.

Our comprehensive approach recognizes the unique status and needs of the covered populations in our digital connectivity efforts. This Plan identifies five key digital connectivity challenges and develops corresponding objectives, short- and long-term goals, and KPIs to address each. These objectives are aligned with specific strategies detailed in Section 2.3.1 of the Plan, resulting in a total of 22 objectives that support the 19 strategies.

Where baseline data is unavailable, we have committed to ongoing data collection in collaboration with various entities during the Capacity Grant phase. This approach ensures that we continue to obtain information and insights to refine our strategies and achieve our goals. We plan to fund gathering this information during the Capacity Grant phase.

This Plan puts forth measurable objectives that promote various aspects crucial for digital connectivity among all covered populations. These include the availability and affordability of broadband technology, the accessibility and inclusivity of online public resources and services, digital literacy, awareness of online security measures, and consumer devices and technical support. Each objective is future-focused and anchored to a quantifiable result.

Additionally, the Plan ensures that each of the eight covered populations and all five key areas have at least one measurable objective. Moreover, objectives are not confined to singular

covered populations but often span multiple groups, reflecting our integrated approach to digital connectivity. This comprehensive and detailed framework of objectives and KPIs ensures that every facet of Georgia's digital connectivity challenges is addressed.

2.3.2.1 Key challenge 1: Lack of broadband availability

2.3.2.1.1 Objective 1.A: Achieve statewide broadband access

The State of Georgia aims to improve statewide broadband access by 2029, with a focus on providing better connectivity to underserved communities. At present, only 41 percent of Georgians have access to 100/20 Mbps broadband at home, which serves as the starting point for online participation.

This objective of achieving statewide broadband access aligns with Strategy 1.1, increasing access to residential broadband infrastructure and Strategy 1.2, expanding collaborative efforts as broadband progresses, a crucial aspect underpinned by the BEAD program. The BEAD and Digital Connectivity programs are instrumental in bringing new communities online in ways they have not experienced before, marking a significant shift in digital accessibility. The formation of partnerships with ISPs, CAIs, government bodies, and other stakeholders becomes imperative in this context. As physical broadband networks expand, such collaborations facilitate adoption which is a critical step in bridging connectivity gaps, especially in areas presently underserved with 100/20 broadband speeds.

This objective is important in guaranteeing that high-speed, reliable internet is accessible to the covered populations in their respective living environments. These individuals are often found in various residences, including apartments, multi-dwelling units, public housing, rural homes, senior housing complexes, and transitional housing designed for the reentry of formerly incarcerated individuals. As broadband expands and new communities gain online access, the role of digital connectivity becomes increasingly critical, aiding residents in adapting to and fully benefiting from the new digital opportunities. By focusing on extending high-speed internet to these diverse residential settings, the initiative takes an essential step in ensuring the availability of broadband access and its meaningful adoption.

The objective's KPI is the percentage of locations with access to 100/20 broadband, which includes all covered populations as defined by the Digital Equity Act of 2021. The short-term goal is to increase this coverage to 95 percent, with the long-term goal of reaching 98 percent coverage. Rural residents currently have a 69 percent coverage rate, which the State aims to increase to 95 percent in the short term and 98 percent in the long term. This approach is essential to ensure that all residents, whether they are renters in urban apartments, homeowners in rural areas, elderly individuals in senior housing, or families in public housing, have equal access to essential digital resources and residential broadband infrastructure.

To support digital connectivity in prisons and jails and address the unique circumstances of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals, GTA will collaborate closely with the Georgia Department of Corrections, the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, and civil rights and community-based partner organizations to refine baseline data for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.]

The FCC National Broadband Map will provide the data necessary to monitor and evaluate progress toward these goals.

2.3.2.1.2 Objective 1.B: Increase broadband subscription statewide through a holistic awareness campaign

The objective is to significantly increase the number of broadband subscriptions in Georgia by the end of 2027. Broadband subscriptions are defined as the number of households actively signed up for and receiving broadband internet service, a key resource for accessing a wide range of digital services. To achieve the objective, a targeted awareness campaign will be initiated with a strategy that involves partnering with ISPs, CAIs, governments, and other vital stakeholders. These partnerships are crucial for informing residents about the availability of broadband services in their communities.

This objective targets all covered populations currently without internet access who desire internet service but are hindered by barriers such as limited broadband availability or affordability issues. The aim is to increase broadband subscriptions through a holistic awareness campaign, striving to elevate the subscription rate from the current 81.3 percent baseline of all residential locations in the State subscribed to a 90 percent target.

2.3.2.1.3 Objective 1.C: Spur a significant increase in broadband subscription for Georgians living in counties with highest digital inequities

This objective focuses on increasing broadband subscription rates among Georgians in counties identified by high poverty and low connectivity. Targeting these areas is crucial because they represent regions where digital inequities are most pronounced. As broadband projects in these areas reach completion, it is vital to recognize that these communities will gain access to essential internet services, necessitating additional support to fully leverage this new connectivity. By focusing on these high-need counties, the strategy addresses a critical gap in digital access and adoption which is vital for participation in the modern digital economy and society.

The measurable goal is to raise the percentage of locations with broadband subscriptions in these targeted counties, which includes all covered populations who reside in these areas. The initiative starts with a baseline of 80.2 percent subscription rate, as recorded by GTA data collection, and aims to achieve a short-term goal of 85 percent and a long-term goal of 90 percent for 31 percent of high-need counties.

The strategy to attain this objective is to expand collaborative efforts as broadband progresses. ISPs are critical in expanding the physical broadband networks, while CAIs, governments, and other essential partners lead community-level initiatives. This comprehensive approach aims to ensure that residents in the most digitally inequitable counties receive improved broadband access. For more details on the counties targeted by this initiative, please see the chart in Appendix C: County digital connectivity data.

2.3.2.1.4 Spur equitable outcomes across sectors related to broadband expansion

The objective is to establish partnerships among agencies to improve and showcase progress in key sectors of education, healthcare, workforce development, and civic engagement by providing better access to broadband. This will be achieved by forming partnerships among different agencies to track and highlight the positive impact of enhanced broadband connectivity on service delivery in these areas. The strategy to achieve this objective is to provide high-speed internet access to every unserved household in Georgia, especially in areas where broadband service is not available or is unreliable. Another strategy is to encourage collaboration between state and local agencies to ensure that the benefits of broadband expansion are felt across the sectors and communities. This approach is designed to ensure that the expansion of broadband translates into tangible and widespread benefits in essential public services for all covered populations.

To evaluate the success of our interagency partnerships in enhancing service delivery key sectors for the covered populations, we will use an index of KPIs from objectives 1.A-1.C, therefore, this objective is not listed in the table. This index will include the percentage of locations with access to 100/20 Mbps broadband, the rise in statewide broadband subscription rates, and the subscription levels in counties with notable digital inequities. These KPIs will help us assess how effectively our broadband connectivity initiatives are reaching and benefiting the intended communities.

2.3.2.1.5 Key challenge 1: Measurable objectives table

Measurable objective	KPI	Baseline (current state)	5-year goal	10-year goal	Data source
1.A: Achieve statewide broadband access: every Georgian can access 100/20	Percentage of locations with access to 100/20 broadband (includes all covered populations except currently incarcerated)[68]	90%	95%	98%	FCC National Broadband Map

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[68] GTA did not include currently incarcerated individuals in this measurable objective because broadband availability is facility-based with access managed by the overseeing state agency per state law and regulations. GTA

Measurable objective	KPI	Baseline (current state)	5-year goal	10-year goal	Data source
Mbps at home[67]	Percentage of rural residents	69%	95%	98%	
1.B: Increase broadband subscription statewide through a holistic awareness campaign	Percentage increase in broadband subscription rates of residential locations in state	81.3%	86%	90%	Microsoft Digital Equity Dashboard
1.C: Spur a significant increase in broadband subscription for Georgians living in counties with highest digital inequities	Percentage of locations subscribed to broadband in targeted counties (includes all covered populations)	80.2%	85%	90%	GTA data collection

2.3.2.2 Key challenge 2: Low-income households struggle to afford broadband services, devices, and technical support

2.3.2.2.1 Objective 2.A: Boost ACP enrollment

The primary objective is to significantly enhance enrollment in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The specific goal is to achieve an increase in ACP enrollment from the current baseline of 1,014,346 unenrolled eligible households of 38 percent to 52 percent in the short term and 66 percent in the long term. This initiative addresses the critical challenge faced by low-income families who often struggle to afford broadband services, devices, and technical support, which is essential for full participation in today's digital world.

Regarding this objective it is crucial to acknowledge that this effort specifically targets covered populations who meet the eligibility criteria for the benefit, which may not encompass all covered populations. Eligibility for ACP is determined based on income levels—households with incomes at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines qualify. Additionally, participation in federal assistance programs like SNAP, Medicaid, Veterans Pension and Survivors

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does, however, include formerly incarcerated among the covered populations addressed by this measurable objective.

[67] These coverage metrics reflect current state as reported by the FCC in the National Broadband Map as of July 25, 2023. They do not include grant funded or planned deployments for the future.

Benefit, Federal Public Housing Assistance or the Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch Program also grants eligibility. (For more information see https://www.affordableconnectivity.gov.)

The strategy for meeting this objective involves a collaborative effort with ISPs enrolled as ACP providers while also providing community-level support such as enrollment assistance to make ACP more accessible. Ensuring all eligible households, including those hindered by language, disability, or lack of awareness, have access to necessary information and support is a cornerstone of this approach. Broad outreach efforts are crucial, as they aim to improve connectivity for these individuals.

At the time of developing this Plan, ACP has not yet been reauthorized with additional funding. If ACP is not refunded, our objective will pivot towards a carefully planned "off-boarding" process. This process will involve collaborating with our partners to ensure a smooth transition for those affected, providing guidance and support in exploring alternative broadband affordability options, and maintaining communication with stakeholders to minimize disruption to our digital connectivity goals.

2.3.2.2.2 Objective 2.B: Increase the percentage of ISPs with low-cost broadband service offerings

To improve digital connectivity in the state and ensure that everyone has access to the necessary technology, our objective is to increase the percentage of ISPs that offer low-cost broadband services. Currently, 64 percent of ISPs provide such affordable solutions to lower-income families, according to our data from the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC).

Our short-term goal is to raise this figure to 75 percent. To achieve this, we will engage with ISPs, highlighting the benefits to society and the potential expansion of their customer base that accessible pricing can yield. We will work with ISPs to identify barriers they face in offering these services and develop incentives or support structures to address these challenges.

In the long term, we aim to achieve a significant increase to 95 percent, ensuring that the vast majority of lower-income households can afford broadband services. This ambitious target will require ongoing dialogues with service providers and exploration of policy changes and partnership opportunities that can create a more conducive environment for low-cost service expansion.

We will monitor progress towards these targets systematically using data from USAC, allowing us to track increases in the availability of low-cost broadband offerings. This data will inform our strategy and support our continuous improvement, helping us to refine our approach and ensure that our efforts effectively address the digital divide, empowering all individuals to participate in today's interconnected community.

2.3.2.2.3 Objective 2.C: Enhance device access for all covered populations through a sustainable device ecosystem

By 2027, our aim is to have a well-established device ecosystem in Georgia that prioritizes device ownership and technology reuse and thrives on the backbone of local partnerships across both the public and private sectors. We aim to secure active commitments from at least five essential stakeholders, creating a network that includes community organizations actively involved in device distribution and skill training. This concerted effort will be reinforced by the statewide consortium's advocacy for device accessibility.

We will ensure a transparent and actionable framework, enabling all Georgians from covered populations to access devices and the necessary technical support systems. Our performance will be measured by reducing the percentage of Georgians who report the inability to repair a broken computing device within a month. The current baseline is TBD, pending data collection that GTA is currently undertaking, with the short-term goal set at 95 percent and the long-term goal set at 98 percent pending the baseline data value. Baseline data collection for covered populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

The metric will be disaggregated to capture the accessibility for covered populations, setting a baseline for various subsets, including aging individuals, incarcerated individuals not in federal facilities, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals facing language barriers, members of racial or ethnic minorities, and rural residents. With data collection in progress for these groups, we intend to reach a point where 100 percent report an ability to fix a broken device within a month, reflecting accurate and comprehensive digital connectivity.

2.3.2.2.4 Objective 2.D: Georgians in need can access affordable device options through digital connectivity organizations

Digital connectivity organizations distribute computing devices and provide technical support, which is critical in simultaneously addressing broadband adoption and device affordability. We aim to ensure that all members of the covered population can obtain devices that meet their needs at an affordable rate.

Currently, four digital connectivity organizations are actively distributing devices for ownership and technical support to covered populations, as identified by GTA data collection. Recognizing the vital role these organizations play, our goal is to increase the number to five in the short term and to six in the long term while also strengthening the capabilities and resources of the existing organizations. This dual approach forms part of Georgia's digital connectivity capacity-building initiative, which aims to bolster the entire ecosystem of support for device accessibility across the state. By enhancing the existing network and inviting new participants, we endeavor to create a more robust and comprehensive framework for digital equity in Georgia.

According to the Microsoft Digital Equity Dashboard, 76.8 percent of households in Georgia have access to computing devices. However, we aim to elevate this significantly in the long term. To accomplish this, we plan to collect necessary data in partnership with State agencies such as GaDOE and DHS along with nonprofit organizations like Community Action Agencies and others within the State Collective.

This objective aligns with our strategy to expand device ownership initiatives, recognizing the need for large-screen devices like laptops and desktops and other device essentials such as cameras and software in homes to support the needs of students, individuals with disabilities, and others requiring more complex digital interaction. This will ultimately help us achieve our objective of providing affordable device access and a comprehensive device ecosystem that supports the needs of the covered populations.

2.3.2.2.5 Objective 2.E: Increase device loaner programs and public computer labs through Anchor Institutions serving covered populations

Our aim is to improve the digital resources and accessibility provided by CAIs. These institutions include schools, libraries, medical facilities, community colleges, and other support organizations. These CAIs are pivotal in providing digital connectivity services, not only on-site during business hours but also through extensive lending programs. Devices offered for lending encompass laptops, tablets, and hotspots. Furthermore, these institutions host well-equipped computer labs with desktops or laptop carts, charging stations, supplemented with other device essentials like mice, headphones, and accessible technologies such as screen readers, catering to a diverse range of needs and abilities. This is particularly important for ensuring continuous digital access for everyone, especially those without such resources at home.

Device loaner programs and public computer lab access are crucial components of digital equity work, and CAIs are often the one-stop shop for community members. In addition to these resources, they offer training spaces for community members to learn digital skills and receive help with navigating technology. By providing these resources and support opportunities, CAIs serve as affordable and welcoming centers for ongoing support for digital connections, further empowering community members to work, learn, connect, and thrive in a modern digitally connected society.

We plan to increase device loaner programs and public computer labs through CAIs, specifically targeting covered populations. The baseline number of CAIs that currently have device loaner programs is 385. Our objective is to increase this by 20 percent in the short term and 40 percent in the long term. Within the first year of Georgia's digital connectivity capacity-building initiative we seek to determine the current level of device access among the covered populations both at home and in the community. This will shape our strategies to enhance device loaner programs and computer labs through CAIs.

To establish a clear baseline for our KPI on device access, we are introducing new data collection tools, notably the Community Connections Map Survey. This survey, serving as an extension of the data collected for establishing this plan, is designed to complement and enhance our current data by providing additional details on digital resource availability and usage. It solicits input from various stakeholders, including CAIs, to create a comprehensive map of where technology intersects with community spaces and everyday life.

In addition to the survey, various organizations within the State Collective will collaborate to gather accurate information on device access at the community level. These include GTA, GaDOE, GPLS, local governments, housing authorities, senior centers, faith-based organizations, Goodwill career centers, and nonprofit organizations. The data acquired will refine our baseline KPI, guiding our efforts in digital inclusivity and empowering Georgians with equitable access to digital resources and technology. Baseline data collection for covered populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

This objective aligns with the strategy to harness the foundational role of CAIs as pillars of device accessibility, focusing on fortifying their digital resources and promoting ready access to device programs. This approach aims to provide members of the covered populations with access to current technology, while also fostering environments that support digital literacy and raise awareness about affordable device ownership options.

2.3.2.2.6 Sustain broadband affordability

Affordability is essential for increasing internet usage among Georgians and bridging the digital divide. Therefore, by tracking measurable objectives 2.A-2.E, GTA will monitor increases in affordable broadband and device ownership/access rates among the State's low-income households. The overall goal is to sustain broadband affordability in Georgia by making high-speed internet financially accessible and ensuring its continued affordability over time, especially for low-income households.

This Plan acknowledges that sufficient funding will be required to achieve objectives 2.A-2.E. To this end, the objectives aim to quantify the business case for additional investment in digital connectivity throughout Georgia. This will help to secure the resources needed to sustain and expand affordability and device initiatives, thus enabling more Georgians to access and use the internet to meet their needs consistently.

2.3.2.2.7 Key challenge 2: Measurable objectives table

Measurable objective	KPI	Baseline (current state)	5-year goal	10-year goal	Data source
2.A: Boost ACP enrollment	Percentage of eligible households participating in ACP	38%	52%	66%	USAC
2.B: Increase the percentage of ISPs that offer low-cost products for lower-income households	Percentage of ISPs that offer low-cost products for lower-income households	64%	75%	95%	USAC[69]
2.C: Enhance device access for all covered populations through a sustainable device ecosystem – members of covered populations have access to a workable computing device[70]	Percentage of covered households	TBD	95%	98%	GTA phone survey, U.S. Census Bureau ACS data
	Percentage for aging individuals[71]	TBD	95%	98%	
	Percentage for incarcerated individuals (other than in a federal facility)	TBD	95%	98%	
	Percentage for veterans	TBD	95%	98%	
	Percentage for individuals with disabilities	TBD	95%	98%	
	Percentage for individuals with a language barrier (English learner or low literacy)	TBD	95%	98%	

[69] Baseline estimate based on ACP participation data from USAC and known ISPs in Georgia from GTA's internal data.

[70] GTA is still developing baseline data for all covered populations for this measurable objective. GTA has preliminarily set the 5- and 10-year goals for all covered populations to be the same, matching goals for the general population, and will reevaluate these goals when baseline data is available. **Baseline data collection for covered populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.**

[71] Data gathered through the residential phone survey categorized seniors as individuals aged 65 years or older. Future survey instruments will reflect the NTIA's definition of aging individuals/seniors as 60 years or older.

Measurable objective	KPI	Baseline (current state)	5-year goal	10-year goal	Data source
	Percentage for members of racial or ethnic minorities	TBD	95%	98%	
	Percentage of rural residents	TBD	95%	98%	
2.D: Georgians in need can access affordable device options through digital connectivity organizations	Number of organizations that provide desktop or laptop computers for ownership	4	5	6	GTA data collection
2.E: Increase device loaner programs and public computer labs through CAIs serving covered populations	Number of CAIs that have device loaner programs	385[72]	462	539	GTA data collection
	Number of CAIs that have public computer labs	TBD[73]	Baseline + 15%	5-year goal + 15%	

2.3.2.3 Key challenge 3: Covered populations need support to develop digital skills including skills to protect themselves and their personal data online.

2.3.2.3.1 Objective 3.A: Design and develop a statewide digital skills framework

This objective aims to develop a digital skills framework for the entire State of Georgia during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation. The primary objective is to establish a comprehensive guide for digital proficiency across the State, particularly emphasizing the digital skills necessary for education, employment, healthcare, and civic participation among the

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[72] This baseline uses the number of public library locations in Georgia under GPLS: https://www.usg.edu/institutions/profile/georgia_public_library_service#:~:text=GPLS%20provides%20support%20services%20and,385%20branches%20across%20the%20state.

[73] GTA is collecting this data in coordination with GPLS and other partner agencies and organizations and will reevaluate short-term and long-term goals once the baseline is determined. Baseline data collection for covered populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

covered populations. The Digital Connectivity Advisory Committee, in collaboration with organizations including the TCSG Office of Adult Education and Literacy Action, will spearhead the framework development.

The current baseline for the framework leverages the 14 digital skill indicators GTA used to collect data on digital skills for this Plan. GTA conducted a phone survey to gather information and to rate respondents' confidence in performing 14 digital activities. The survey shows that Georgians have an average of 11.3 out of 14 key digital skills. The short-term goal is to develop the framework further and expand upon these indicators. The long-term goal is to update and refine the framework as technology evolves.

The importance of having a comprehensive digital skills framework is emphasized by statewide objectives that aim to enhance digital competencies for the covered populations. The framework is a guiding tool for educational institutions and training centers and a strategic response to the statewide necessity for improved digital literacy and safety. In this context, a framework serves as a structured guide, offering a systematic approach for practitioners working with the covered populations. It would outline key principles, strategies, and benchmarks for assessing and enhancing digital skills. By doing so, the framework provides educators, trainers, and other professionals with a clear roadmap for identifying the digital skill gaps among the covered populations and implementing targeted training programs. This structured approach helps these practitioners more effectively equip individuals with the skills necessary to navigate and participate in an increasingly digital economy, with a strong emphasis on online security and literacy.

2.3.2.3.2 Objective 3.B: Expand digital literacy through community collaborations.

This objective emphasizes expanding digital literacy in Georgia by fostering collaborations with various community organizations, focusing on significantly enhancing the digital competencies of Georgians, especially those in low-income and senior households. These expanded programs are designed to be conveniently accessible within the fabric of community life, through familiar and trusted institutions such as educational establishments, libraries, community-based organizations, and local governments.

The goal is to increase the number of entities serving these groups, offering foundational digital and advanced technology skills training. The KPI's short-term goal is to increase the number of digital literacy programs by 15 percent in the short term from a baseline of 142 programs. In the long term, we aim to achieve a further 15 percent growth, resulting in a total increase of 30 percent from the baseline. We plan to strengthen public-private collaborations by forming partnerships with educational institutions, community-based organizations, and local governments to achieve this. We will also gather data through the Community Connections Map

Survey to understand the digital literacy landscape and resource needs of community organizations that cater to covered populations.

Furthermore, this objective addresses the key challenge that covered populations need support to develop digital skills. These skills not only encompass basic digital literacy but also extend to educating individuals on protecting their data online. Through strategic collaboration with various community organizations, the expansion of digital literacy programs enhances digital competencies conveniently and comprehensively. This approach ensures that the programs are not only accessible but also integrated with other essential services, making them more effective and relevant to the needs of the covered populations. This objective is fundamental to our strategy to empower community organizations championing digital literacy initiatives. Central to this strategy is the concept of multi-generational learning and leveraging both hybrid and remote learning solutions. This approach ensures a wide-reaching impact, catering to the varied digital needs of Georgia's diverse communities.

2.3.2.3.3 Objective 3.C: Increase digital skills program enrollment and proficiency among covered populations

The objective is to increase enrollment and digital skills proficiency as evidenced by digital literacy assessments to specifically addresses the needs of low-income individuals, aging individuals, English language learners, and veterans. The objective is based on a quantitative baseline highlighting the enrollment in programs serving these populations.

This KPI is based on the baseline data provided by Northstar. The data shows that 2,581 individuals were enrolled in digital skills programs at their locations before 2023, with 1,296 enrollments in 2022 alone. In the same year, 674 individuals demonstrated their digital skills by passing digital literacy assessments. The short-term goal is to increase the enrollment in digital skills programs serving covered populations by 15 percent. In the long term, we aim to achieve a further 15 percent growth, resulting in a total increase of 30 percent from the baseline. These targets ensure the initiative's progress is measurable and aligned to enhance digital literacy across Georgia's diverse populations.

There are 62 Northstar Digital Literacy locations in Georgia that provide support in setting up and taking assessments, computer classes, and support staff for learners. There are also 20 Lift Zones and four Connected Learning Labs. The Lift Zones provide versatile learning and digital engagement spaces, catering to a broad spectrum of community needs, including students, English language learners, adults, and aging individuals. Meanwhile, AT&T Connected Learning Labs offers free internet, computers, and educational resources, primarily targeting vulnerable students and families. Over 100 organizations in Georgia have identified that they host digital

skills programs, contributing to a broader network of resources and opportunities for enhancing digital literacy in the State.

We are using baseline data from Northstar Digital Literacy in this Plan. However, to obtain a more comprehensive evaluation throughout the span of the program, we will expand our data collection in partnership with various organizations. This expansion will provide us with a better understanding of the enrollment and proficiency levels of covered populations in digital skills programs, using various curricula and assessment tools.

This objective is directly linked to our strategy to enhance digital literacy through youth and adult education platforms by providing customized learning resources to covered populations. By improving enrollment in digital skills programs and integrating digital literacy into youth and adult education platforms, we are creating an inclusive learning ecosystem responsive to the varying needs and challenges of enhancing digital skills proficiency.

2.3.2.3.4 Objective 3.D: Covered populations in Georgia can effectively use the internet if they so choose

This objective focuses on advancing specific internet usage capabilities among covered populations, emphasizing key digital skills necessary for effective internet use. These skills range from basic digital literacy, such as navigating websites and using email, to more advanced skills like online safety and data protection. According to the Digital Equity Act Population Viewer, 18.8 percent of Georgia's population is not using the internet, which highlights the urgency of this objective. The reasons for this digital divide are multifaceted and often stem from a combination of factors such as lack of access to affordable broadband services, limited digital literacy, and in some cases, a lack of awareness or interest in the potential benefits of internet use.

The baselines and goals shown are based on the measurement of 14 digital skills representing common online activities for covered populations.[74] GTA's phone survey asked respondents to rate their confidence performing each of these activities. As a general indicator of digital literacy, KPIs related to people's confidence in using the internet indicate the total number of digital skills individuals in each population can perform with confidence, on average out of 14, with current baselines varying across different populations. The baseline skill level for the overall covered populations is 10.9/14. The short-term goal is set at 12/14, with a long-term goal of 13/14. Similar targets are set for specific subsets: covered households start from an 8.8/14 baseline, aging

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[74] Skills measured are 1. sending and receiving emails; 2. using social media; 3, participating in online video, voice, or conference calls (such as Zoom, Skype, or FaceTime); 4. operating a small home business; 5. working remotely and telecommuting; 6. searching for a job online; 7, taking classes or participating in job training online; 8. accessing medical services online; 9. accessing government services online; 10. shopping, making travel reservations, or using other online consumer services; 11. accessing online financial services; 12. identifying online fraud (such as phishing schemes); 13. identifying misleading information or disinformation; and 14. adjusting privacy settings online (such as on social media).

individuals from 9.1/14, and veterans from 11.2/14. Individuals with disabilities have a baseline of 9.7/14, while members of racial or ethnic minorities begin at 11.5/14 and rural residents at 10.9/14.

While the State's digital connectivity efforts will address the needs of all covered populations, baseline measurements for low-income and aging individuals are notably lower than the population as a whole and other covered populations, making them a particular focus for GTA.

Baseline data is not yet available for incarcerated individuals and those with language barriers, highlighting the need for targeted interventions for these groups. Incarcerated individuals might face restrictions on internet access and limited opportunities for digital education. At the same time, those with language barriers might need help with content that is not available in their primary language or is too advanced for their current literacy levels. Collaboration with State agencies and nonprofits is crucial to establish a meaningful baseline and set achievable goals for these populations. We will establish partnerships with entities such as the GDC, GaDOE, the Latin American Association, and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to get the baseline data for these populations as described in Section 4.1 and Section 5.1.[75] Through targeted efforts and strategic collaborations, the goal is to incrementally increase the average digital skills score, ultimately ensuring that all covered populations in Georgia can effectively use the internet. Baseline data collection for these populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

Georgia's strategy for achieving its objective is focused on enhancing digital literacy by providing access to quality educational resources and training programs to equip individuals with the necessary skills to navigate the internet confidently. This approach is crucial in realizing the goals as it systematically nurtures essential internet usage skills across various covered populations. It also involves integrating digital literacy into school curricula and adult education programs; the strategy aims to improve the overall effectiveness of internet use among all covered populations in Georgia. The goal is to ensure equitable digital access and proficiency, thereby significantly enhancing the effective internet usage capabilities of all covered populations in the State.

2.3.2.3.5 Objective 3.E: Covered populations in Georgia can access information or training to learn how to protect their security and privacy online.

This objective aims to enhance the digital capabilities of covered populations, focusing on the vital aspects of online security and privacy. It recognizes that protecting privacy and ensuring online security are essential skills that are needed to safeguard user information. Protecting privacy requires an understanding of digital footprints and the ability to navigate the complexities of data sharing in the digital world. Ensuring security online involves identifying and avoiding

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[75] GTA intends to establish this KPI before Digital Equity Capacity Building Grant funding is available.

cyber threats, knowing how to use Wi-Fi networks securely, and understanding basic cybersecurity practices to protect devices and personal information from unauthorized access.

Each covered population, with its unique vulnerabilities and circumstances, requires these critical skills in protecting privacy and security to navigate the digital landscape safely. Seniors need to safeguard against identity theft, and veterans and individuals with disabilities might require enhanced security measures due to sensitive personal information; low-income households, as well as racial and ethnic minorities, often need heightened privacy awareness to protect against digital exploitation and discrimination. Additionally, those with language barriers require these skills to confidently access information and services online without fearing miscommunication or misunderstanding that could lead to privacy breaches or security risks.

KPIs have been established to measure the effectiveness of this objective. The current baseline data from a GTA phone survey reveals varied confidence levels among covered populations in protecting their online security and privacy. For instance, the confidence level in online security protection stands at 81 percent across the board, with a goal to increase this to 85 percent in the short term and 90 percent in the long term. This pattern is mirrored in the data for online privacy protection, with a current confidence level of 76 percent and similar short- and long-term goals set at 85 percent and 90 percent, respectively. These figures, however, show significant disparities among subgroups, such as aging individuals, veterans, individuals with disabilities, members of racial or ethnic minorities, and rural residents. Notably, GTA is still gathering baseline data for incarcerated individuals and those with language barriers, indicating a pressing need for targeted interventions.

For the groups with a TBD baseline, as indicated in the table, GTA is set to collaborate with key state agencies and nonprofits to establish baseline data and develop targeted interventions. For incarcerated individuals, the GDC and DJJ will provide data and insights into the digital literacy needs within correctional facilities. Similarly, for individuals facing language barriers, the GaDOE, the Latin American Association, and the IRC will play a crucial role in gathering data and understanding the unique challenges faced by this group. Baseline data collection for covered populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

To bridge these gaps, GTA, in collaboration with partners within the State Collective, is implementing Strategy 3.3: Foster online safety and privacy awareness within digital literacy programs. This strategy integrates digital privacy and cybersecurity modules into digital literacy training, emphasizing personal data protection, secure browsing, and awareness of phishing threats. It proposes a layered cyber literacy strategy that provides foundational training to vulnerable groups and opens pathways to advanced learning and career opportunities in cybersecurity. This dual approach protects these groups from cyber threats and leverages Georgia's strengths in the cyber sector to foster talent and expertise.

2.3.2.3.6 Objective 3.F: Enhance digital health literacy in covered populations

This objective aims to improve digital health literacy among low-income, senior, and rural communities by providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge to access and use digital healthcare services. Digital health literacy refers to finding, understanding, and evaluating health information from electronic sources and using that knowledge to address health issues effectively.

This objective is crucial in bridging the digital divide, especially in areas where in-person medical services are scarce, ensuring better health outcomes across the State. The goal for this objective is to create a network of organizations offering digital health navigation and literacy training. Currently, this objective is in the data collection phase, which means that the initial stage is to understand the digital health literacy landscape of the covered populations. Baseline data collection for covered populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

The short-term goal is to convene partners, including healthcare providers and community organizations, to lay the groundwork for this network during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation. The long-term goal is to fully establish and operationalize this network by 2029, ensuring widespread access to digital health literacy resources.

The State Collective, which includes State agencies such as the Georgia Department of Public Health and Georgia Department of Community Health, academic contributors like Morehouse School of Medicine and Mercer University Center for Rural Health and Health Disparities, health centers across the state, the Southeastern Telehealth Resource Center, and AARP, will track and inform the progress towards these goals. This collaborative approach ensures a comprehensive, data-driven strategy to enhance digital health literacy across Georgia's diverse communities.

Seniors and low-income households often face technological barriers and limited access to digital resources, making it difficult to access online health services. This initiative aims to demystify technology for these groups, providing them with the necessary skills and confidence to navigate digital healthcare platforms. Rural residents, who often struggle with limited broadband access and healthcare services, will find this initiative particularly beneficial as it aims to provide them with the skills to access telehealth services, thus overcoming geographical barriers.

Digital health literacy training focusing on mental health is planned to ease the transition of veterans and incarcerated individuals reentering society. The establishment of a network of organizations will ensure both groups have access to customized digital mental health resources, bridging the gap in their digital health literacy and enhancing their ability to manage their mental well-being effectively. For English learners or those with low literacy levels, digital health

navigators will be crucial in providing personalized assistance and training in their native languages.

This objective is aligned with the strategy to create a cadre of Digital Navigators, who are essentially ambassadors of digital literacy, equipped to assist seniors, English learners, and other covered populations. These Navigators are instrumental in establishing trust, breaking down language barriers, and cultivating skills that enable individuals to utilize online health resources efficiently and confidently.

2.3.2.3.7 Objective 3.G: Enhance workforce development and opportunities in telecommunications, technology, and broadband-related industries.

This objective aims to enhance workforce development and expand opportunities as a direct result of the historic investment in broadband expansion and digital connectivity. It focuses on expanding opportunities for ethnic and racial minorities, veterans, and low-income individuals, including those currently in the workforce, those preparing to enter it, and those seeking to upskill for better opportunities.

The KPI is to increase the percentage of individuals from covered populations enrolled in workforce programs, thereby ensuring their active participation and completion. The KPI baseline is TBD because GTA is still in the discovery phase. GTA is taking stock of the programs and workforce needs while trying to understand Georgia's workforce landscape as it relates to broadband, telecommunications, and technology. To determine the baseline, we plan to collaborate with relevant entities such as the Georgia Department of Labor, telecommunications companies, the Fiber Broadband Association, and the Wireless Infrastructure Association (WIA). By working with these entities, we can identify areas of improvement and implement effective strategies to address any gaps in the programs. Baseline data collection for covered populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

The Plan sets a short-term goal of boosting enrollment by 15 percent and a comparable increase as a long-term target. To achieve these objectives, we will use a systematic, data-driven approach to leverage data from sources like the TCSG, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Department of Labor, and various workforce organizations. This KPI will help measure progress and demonstrate the commitment to increasing accessibility and opportunities.

Enhancing workforce development in broadband, telecommunications, and technology is pivotal for fostering inclusive growth and opportunity in Georgia. This objective aims to increase representation of ethnic and racial minorities in industries where they have been historically underrepresented. It creates accessible pathways to training, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities by equipping them with digital literacy and other high-value skills essential in these fields. Veterans transitioning from military to civilian life find alignment in these sectors with their

skills in teamwork and problem-solving. These necessitating programs effectively translate military experience to the civilian tech landscape. Similarly, these development opportunities are gateways to economic stability and advancement for low-income individuals, whether currently employed, entering the workforce, or seeking to upskill. Their success hinges on programs offering flexible learning, financial support, and targeted outreach, ensuring skill acquisition and the ability to translate these competencies into sustainable careers.

The Plan's objective to enhance workforce development in broadband, telecommunications, and technology is significantly bolstered by Georgia's robust labor force and educational infrastructure, especially in its relevance to the covered populations of ethnic and racial minorities, veterans, and low-income individuals. Georgia's labor force of 5.3 million workers, including a strong talent pool in computer and mathematical occupations, positions the State as an ideal environment for developing vital digital skills.

For veterans, Georgia's focus on cutting-edge sectors like cybersecurity, as seen through the Georgia Cyber Center, and advanced manufacturing, offered at the Georgia Advanced Manufacturing Center, provides an avenue to transfer their skills and experiences to civilian roles in high-demand industries. These initiatives ensure veterans have the support and resources to transition effectively into the technology workforce.

Low-income individuals can benefit greatly from Georgia's educational resources, including two of the top 20 public universities in the nation, leading HBCUs, and programs like the HOPE scholarship and Career Grant. These initiatives open doors for affordable education and training, crucial for those aiming to enter or upskill in the technology sector. The Georgia Quick Start program, with its tailored workforce training, further ensures that these individuals receive the specific skills employers need, enhancing their employability and career prospects. This is also beneficial for ethnic and racial minorities, who can gain access to training and job opportunities in fields where they have historically been underrepresented.

Georgia has a strong foundation for expanding opportunities in education and employment. The state can ensure that key populations are well-prepared to succeed with targeted training, education, and access to high-value job markets. To achieve this objective, Georgia's resources must be aligned with the needs of these populations. This includes creating a database of digital connectivity insights to identify gaps and opportunities in sectors such as education and the workforce. This focused and data-driven approach will help to advance Georgia's digital infrastructure and increase enrollment in relevant workforce development programs for these populations. Overall, this strategy will drive all-encompassing advancement in Georgia's digital landscape.

2.3.2.3.8 Key challenge 3: Measurable objectives table

Short-term and long-term goals, unless otherwise noted, are 5-year and 10-year goals.

Measurable objective	KPI	Baseline (current state)	Short-term goal	Long-term goal	Data source
3.A: Design and develop a statewide digital skills framework	Digital skills framework based on digital skills indicators	0	Develop by 2025	Update by 2027	GTA phone survey and data collection
3.B: Expand digital literacy through community collaborations	Percentage increase of digital literacy programs	142	163	184	GTA data collection
3.C: Increase digital skills program enrollment and proficiency among covered populations	Percentage increase in enrollment in digital skills programs among covered populations.	2,581	2,968	3,355	GTA data collection
	Percentage increase in digital skills assessments	674	775	876	
3.D: Covered populations in Georgia can effectively use the internet if they so choose	Average number of key digital skills performed by members of covered populations (out of 14 measured)	10.9/14	12/14	13/14	GTA phone survey
	Average for covered households	8.8/14	12/14	13/14	
	Average for aging individuals	9.1/14	12/14	13/14	
	Average for incarcerated individuals (other than in a federal facility)	TBD[76]	12/14	13/14	
	Average for veterans	11.2/14	12/14	13/14	
	Average for individuals with disabilities	9.7/14	12/14	13/14	

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[76] Baseline data for incarcerated individuals for this measurable objective is not yet available. GTA is partnering with key agencies and organizations to develop relevant data. GTA sets preliminary 5- and 10-year goals for this covered population to be the same as for other covered populations and will reevaluate these goals when baseline data is available. Baseline data collection for covered populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

Measurable objective	KPI	Baseline (current state)	Short-term goal	Long-term goal	Data source
	Average for individuals with a language barrier (English learner or low literacy)	TBD[77]	12/14	13/14	
	Average for members of racial or ethnic minorities	11.5/14	12/14	13/14	
	Average of rural residents	10.9/14	12/14	13/14	
3.E.1: Members of covered populations can access information or training to learn how to protect their **security** online	Percentage for covered households	77%	85%	90%	GTA phone survey
	Percentage for aging individuals	78%	85%	90%	
	Percentage for formerly incarcerated individuals (other than in a federal facility)[78]	50%	85%	90%	
	Percentage for veterans	81%	85%	90%	
	Percentage for individuals with disabilities	75%	85%	90%	
	Percentage for individuals with a language barrier (English learner or low literacy)[79]	TBD	85%	90%	
	Percentage for members of racial or ethnic minorities	81%	85%	90%	
	Percentage of rural residents	86%	85%	90%	
3.E.2:	Percentage for covered	71%	85%	90%	GTA

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[77] Baseline data for individuals with a language barrier for this measurable objective is not yet available. GTA is partnering with key agencies and organizations to develop relevant data. GTA sets preliminary 5- and 10-year goals for this covered population to be the same as for other covered populations and will reevaluate these goals when baseline data is available. Baseline data collection for covered populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

[78] GTA gathered data through its 2023 phone survey from formerly incarcerated individuals but not from currently incarcerated individuals.

[79] Baseline data for individuals with a language barrier for this measurable objective is not yet available. GTA is partnering with key agencies and organizations to develop relevant data. GTA sets preliminary 5- and 10-year goals for this covered population to be the same as for other covered populations and will reevaluate these goals when baseline data is available. Baseline data collection for covered populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

Measurable objective	KPI	Baseline (current state)	Short-term goal	Long-term goal	Data source
Members of covered populations can access information or training to learn how to protect their **privacy** online	households				phone survey
	Percentage for aging individuals	61%	85%	90%	
	Percentage for formerly incarcerated individuals (other than in a federal facility)[80]	39%	85%	90%	
	Percentage for veterans	69%	85%	90%	
	Percentage for individuals with disabilities	65%	85%	90%	
	Percentage for individuals with a language barrier (English learner or low literacy)	TBD[81]	85%	90%	
	Percentage for members of racial or ethnic minorities	83%	85%	90%	
	Percentage of rural residents	72%	85%	90%	
GG	Number of organizations within a digital health literacy network	0	25	30	GTA data collection

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[80] GTA gathered data through its 2023 phone survey from formerly incarcerated individuals but not from currently incarcerated individuals.

[81] Baseline data for individuals with a language barrier for this measurable objective is not yet available. GTA is partnering with key agencies and organizations to develop relevant data. GTA sets preliminary short-term and long-term goals for this covered population to be the same as for other covered populations and will reevaluate these goals when baseline data is available. Baseline data collection for covered populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

Measurable objective	KPI	Baseline (current state)	Short-term goal	Long-term goal	Data source
3.G: Enhance workforce development and opportunities in telecom, technology, and broadband-related industries.	Number of entities that serve covered populations offering workforce development programs and employment opportunities	TBD[82]	Baseline + 15%	Short-term goal + 15%	TCSG, WIA, DOL data

2.3.2.4 Key challenge 4: Ensuring digital inclusivity as Georgia advances in digital services

2.3.2.4.1 Objective 4.A: Members of covered populations can access government services online

Georgia is committed to addressing the digital divide and enhancing accessibility to online government services for all covered populations. The goal is to increase digital inclusivity and confidence levels among these populations using the internet to access government services. Covered populations in Georgia use online government services for essential needs such as applying for SNAP benefits, renewing Medicaid coverage, scheduling appointments for healthcare services, and enrolling in educational programs. Moreover, supporting individuals from covered populations in using digital platforms to do annual tasks like renewing their driver's licenses, registering a vehicle, or accessing property tax information enhances their autonomy and streamlines their access to vital resources.

The KPIs for this objective show that 90 percent of the survey respondents feel very confident while using the internet to avail government services. The aim is to increase this percentage to 95 percent in the short term and 98 percent in the long term. However, the baseline shows that only 81 percent of individuals with disabilities feel confident in this area, whereas 95 percent of individuals from ethnic or racial minority groups already feel confident. GTA is still gathering baseline data for those with language barriers, which has a baseline set at TBD, through work with partner agencies and organizations serving this covered population. The overall goal is to increase percentages uniformly across all covered populations to at least 95 percent in the short

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[82] GTA is collecting baseline data for entities that serve covered populations offering workforce development programs and employment opportunities in coordination with partner agencies and organizations and will reevaluate short-term and long-term goals when baseline data is available. Baseline data collection for covered populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

term and 98 percent in the long term. Baseline data collection for covered populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

GTA will work with the Department of Community Health, the Department of Human Services, GPLS, and local community organizations to gather baseline data regarding confidence levels among all covered populations. By partnering with these agencies, GTA aims to understand the current confidence levels across all covered populations comprehensively.

Georgia Gateway is vital to the State's digital landscape, particularly for low-income individuals seeking access to essential services. As the primary hub for various assistance programs, it offers a multi-language centralized platform for users to apply for or renew benefits, upload documents, and manage their cases efficiently. This effort is part of a broader initiative to ensure all covered populations can confidently navigate online government services, including those offered through Georgia Gateway. Essential skills like checking emails, making appointments, and familiarizing oneself with available assistance programs such as SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, and CAPS are integral to this initiative.

To meet these objectives, two primary strategies are being implemented. The first is to improve the universal design and accessibility of public digital resources, ensuring that everyone can efficiently use online government services. The second strategy involves training Digital Navigators. These skilled individuals will offer personalized support, particularly to those facing language barriers or lacking digital literacy. This comprehensive approach, underpinned by detailed KPIs and a robust data collection and skills training strategy, is Georgia's commitment to making its digital landscape a more inclusive and accessible environment for all its citizens.

2.3.2.4.2 Objective 4.B: Widen the accessibility and awareness of assistive technology (AT)

The objective is to make assistive technology (AT) more accessible and increase awareness about it. Different populations require different types of technology to fulfill their needs, such as high-contrast keyboards, text-to-speech software, screen readers, real-time translation devices, and health monitoring devices. AT can be tailored to meet different needs and help people participate fully in society.

The KPI is measured by the number of locations where AT is available, with a 10 percent short-term increase and an additional 5 percent long-term increase. The baseline is currently TBD. GTA is working with GPLS, the GTA Office of Digital Services and Solutions, the State ADA Coordinator's Office, and the AccessGA Project to collect baseline data to understand the current availability of AT. Baseline data collection for covered populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

The State ADA Coordinator's Office is crucial in ensuring that all programs, services, and activities operated by the State of Georgia are accessible and usable by everyone, including those with disabilities. This office provides essential educational and technical support to state agencies to align with the objectives of digital connectivity.

AccessGA, Georgia's Accessible ICT Project, co-led by the Georgia State ADA Coordinator's Office, the Georgia Institute of Technology's Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation (CIDI), and GTA, provides technical assistance to State agencies. It focuses on making information and communication technology (ICT) accessible, ensuring equal and timely access for employees and customers with disabilities. Their assistance covers a range of needs, from assistive technology and captioning videos to digital content accessibility and web accessibility, all crucial for achieving digital connectivity goals.

Tools for Life, Georgia's Assistive Technology Act Program, significantly contributes to the objective by increasing access to and acquisition of AT devices and services for Georgians of all ages and disabilities. Tools for Life's mission align seamlessly with the State's goals, ensuring that individuals can live, learn, work, and play independently in communities of their choice.

The strategy involves training Digital Navigators to assist aging individuals, English learners, and other covered populations in effectively using digital resources, removing language barriers, and enhancing digital skills. This strategy is vital in making Georgia's digital advancements inclusive and ensuring that all residents, especially those from covered populations, have the skills and resources to benefit from digital services. Together, the integrated efforts of various State initiatives and programs encapsulate Georgia's commitment to expanding AT resources, empowering individuals through awareness and support for accessibility in areas of digital connectivity.

2.3.2.4.3 Objective 4.C: Train and deploy specialized Digital Navigators within community spaces serving covered populations

The objective is to train and deploy Digital Navigators who specialize in helping covered populations in community spaces. Digital Navigators are individuals stationed in various locations, such as State agencies, nonprofits, libraries, schools, and community centers. They may be volunteers, interns, or employees. Their primary goal is to help people with disabilities, English learners, and other covered populations overcome digital barriers and acquire valuable online skills. They may offer one-on-one support, training, and workshops and assist people in acquiring devices. They may also provide troubleshooting assistance for common technology issues, connect individuals with additional resources, and engage in community outreach. A crucial aspect of their job is to customize their support to suit the specific needs of different individuals, considering factors such as age, language barriers, disabilities, and technical knowledge.

To achieve this measurable objective, we plan a 10 percent short-term increase in the number of Digital Navigators above the baseline and an additional 5 percent long-term increase, pending reevaluation once the baseline is determined. GTA will collect data to monitor this growth and collaborate with various state agencies and entities to establish this critical starting point. Baseline data collection for covered populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

GaDOE plays a critical role because schools are key centers for digital navigation. This collaboration ensures that families and children, particularly those from covered populations, are effectively reached and supported. Similarly, GPLS is a valuable partner as libraries are ideal venues for hosting Digital Navigators and providing an array of training resources essential for digital literacy.

TCSG and Georgia's HBCUs are ideal partners for training and deploying Digital Navigators. These educational institutions have deep roots in community engagement and a history of serving covered populations. Their potential involvement in developing specialized training programs for Digital Navigators could be particularly beneficial in providing tailored assistance to veterans and adult learners. These institutions are well-positioned to leverage their existing infrastructure and expertise to enhance digital literacy and accessibility in their local communities. By collaborating with TCSG and HBCUs, there we have a significant opportunity to foster a skilled network of Digital Navigators who are adept at guiding diverse community members.

In parallel, the Georgia DHS is a crucial partner in extending our reach to aging individuals, individuals with disabilities, and low-income families. Lastly, local nonprofits and community organizations are key partners in providing ground-level insights, trust, and hands-on support essential for the success of digital connectivity initiatives.

Our strategy to train Digital Navigators specialized in assisting covered populations is aligned with this measurable objective as it focuses on deploying these Digital Navigators within community spaces serving them, thereby directly addressing the needs of all covered populations. This initiative addresses a significant challenge in ensuring digital inclusivity as Georgia progresses in digital services.

2.3.2.4.4 Key challenge 4: Measurable objectives table

Measurable objective	KPI	Baseline (current state)	5-year goal	10-year goal	Data source
4.A: Members of covered populations can access government	Percentage of all covered population survey respondents who say they are very confident using the internet to	90%	95%	98%	GTA phone survey

Measurable objective	KPI	Baseline (current state)	5-year goal	10-year goal	Data source
services online	access government services online				
	Percentage for covered households	91%	95%	98%	
	Percentage for aging individuals	85%	95%	98%	
	Percentage for formerly incarcerated individuals (other than in a federal facility)[83]	89%	95%	98%	
	Percentage for veterans	87%	95%	98%	
	Percentage for individuals with disabilities	81%	95%	98%	
	Percentage for individuals with a language barrier (English learner or low literacy)	TBD[84]	95%	98%	
	Percentage for members of racial or ethnic minorities	95%	95%	98%	
	Percentage of rural residents	91%	95%	98%	
4.B: Widen the accessibility to and awareness of assistive technology	Number of locations where assistive technology is available	TBD[85]	Baseline + 10%	Baseline + 15%	GTA data collection

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[83] GTA gathered data through its 2023 phone survey from formerly incarcerated individuals but not from currently incarcerated individuals.

[84] Baseline data for individuals with a language barrier for this measurable objective is not yet available. GTA is partnering with key agencies and organizations to develop relevant data. GTA sets preliminary 5- and 10-year goals for this covered population to be the same as for other covered populations and will reevaluate these goals when baseline data is available. Baseline data collection for covered populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

[85] GTA is working with GPLS, the GTA Office of Digital Services and Solutions, the State ADA Coordinator's Office, and the AccessGA Project to collect baseline data to understand the current availability of AT. GTA has set preliminary 5- and 10-year goals and will reevaluate these goals when baseline data is available.

Measurable objective	KPI	Baseline (current state)	5-year goal	10-year goal	Data source
4.C: Train and deploy specialized Digital Navigators within community spaces serving covered populations	Number of Digital Navigators (volunteers, interns, or employees) at nonprofits, libraries, schools, community centers, etc.	TBD[86]	Baseline + 10%	Baseline + 15%	GTA data collection

2.3.2.5 Key challenge 5: Local communities lack resources and expertise for digital connectivity efforts

2.3.2.5.1 Objective 5.A: Establish local digital connectivity plans

This Plan is committed to addressing a key challenge local communities face: needing more resources and expertise for digital connectivity efforts. This includes the financial resources to invest in digital infrastructure and connectivity projects and the technical knowledge to design, implement, and maintain such projects. Therefore, this objective focuses on establishing local digital connectivity plans tailored to their community.

The objective's KPI is measured by the number of digital connectivity plans created by a county or city, with a baseline of one existing plan, which is currently Clayton County. The short-term goal aims to increase this number to 20, while the long-term goal targets a minimum of 50 plans. Data will be collected to track progress through GTA's data collection methods. This will be done in collaboration with DCA, the 12 Regional Commissions, the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia, the Georgia Municipal Association, and the Georgia City-County Management Association.

To meet these objectives, city and county leaders will actively work to identify the causes of key digital connectivity challenges and opportunities within their communities in alignment with this plan. They will then outline recommendations to tackle the issues, share experiences from local community members, and suggest additional resources. This initiative also aligns with the National Digital Inclusion Alliance's (NDIA) Digital Inclusion Trailblazers, [87] an inventory

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[86] GTA is working with partners organizations to gather baseline data. GTA has set preliminary 5- and 10-year goals and will reevaluate these goals when baseline data is available. Baseline data collection for covered populations will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

[87] "Digital Inclusion Trailblazers," NDIA, https://www.digitalinclusion.org/digital-inclusion-trailblazers/.

highlighting local government activities in bridging the digital divide. The inventory utilizes six key indicators to track digital connectivity that can serve as a benchmark for Georgia's efforts, including having dedicated staff for digital connectivity, the existence or development of a plan, participation in our State consortium, conducting and publishing survey research on internet access and use, funding community digital connectivity programming, and taking steps to increase the affordability of home broadband service.[88] Notably, in 2023, Clayton County was recognized as a Digital Connectivity Trailblazer by NDIA, underscoring its commitment and progress in advancing digital connectivity within the county.

Furthermore, Georgia's initiative to establish Broadband Ready Communities [89] significantly complements and enhances the objective of establishing local digital connectivity plans. DCA has been instrumental in recognizing and supporting communities that acknowledge the critical need for high-speed internet as essential infrastructure. To attain the Broadband Ready Community Designation, communities must adopt a Comprehensive Plan that actively promotes the deployment of broadband services and the adoption of a Broadband Model Ordinance. Integrating digital connectivity into these comprehensive plans is crucial as it symbolizes a community's commitment to effectively aligning their local objectives with the State's broader goals.

This synergy between local and State efforts is vital for the success of the Digital Connectivity Plan. As communities become Broadband Ready, they lay the groundwork for more effective implementation of local digital connectivity plans. This readiness ensures that when counties develop their digital connectivity plans, they do so in an environment conducive to broadband expansion. This alignment is particularly beneficial for the covered populations, as it ensures that the digital infrastructure developed is responsive to their specific needs, thereby promoting equitable access to digital resources.

Moreover, Broadband Ready Communities serve as a model and incentive for other regions to follow suit, creating a ripple effect throughout the State. This concerted effort, where local initiatives are harmonized with State-level strategies, sets a robust foundation for achieving the short-term and long-term goals of enhancing digital connectivity and digital equity across Georgia.

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[88] "Digital Equity Playbook: How City Leaders Can Bridge the Digital Divide," NDIA, https://www.nlc.org/resource/digital-equity-playbook-how-city-leaders-can-bridge-the-digital-divide/.
[89] "Georgia's Designated Broadband Ready Communities," DCA, January 25, 2021, https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/40175048235c46e0b05bc1e629432efa.

The objective of establishing local digital connectivity plans tailored to their community aligns with two key strategies in challenge area 5: "Build collaboration among State, local, and nonprofit entities" and "Sustain and grow State and local efforts in digital connectivity."

The first strategy involves building collaboration across entities to unite the efforts of various organizations and create a cohesive digital connectivity framework. By working together, we can support the development of local plans that cater to the specific needs of covered populations.

The second strategy includes supporting local programs that provide digital skills training, device access, technical assistance, digital navigation, and workforce, economic, and community development services and programs. These efforts enable communities to address existing gaps and prepare for future opportunities. We will provide technical assistance, grant writing expertise, and professional development for key leaders and staff to ensure these programs succeed. In addition, this strategy ensures access to current data and insights on covered populations, enabling localities to make a compelling case for funding and maximize the impact of resources in increasing digital connectivity.

By implementing these strategies, we can bridge the digital divide from the grassroots level, ensuring that the needs of the covered populations are met effectively.

2.3.2.5.2 Objective 5.B: Establish a statewide digital connectivity consortium

This objective aims to establish a statewide digital connectivity consortium, which will address the critical challenge of local communities lacking resources and expertise in digital connectivity efforts. The first KPI for this objective is the number of convening events per year, with a baseline of zero events. The short-term goal over five years is to hold six events annually, increasing to eight in the long-term ten-year target. A second KPI for this objective tracks the number of organizations who become members of the consortium, with a baseline of TBD as the consortium has not yet been formed. GTA will collect data for both metrics. Baseline data collection will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

The consortium is planned to have a broad range of members, including entities identified through the asset inventory included in this Plan and the community connections mapping efforts currently underway. It will also include state agency representation and local governments such as those that have the Broadband Ready designation or have digital connectivity plans.

The consortium will also consist of community champions, which may include individuals and organizations dedicated to enhancing digital access and literacy in their communities. These champions will offer insights at the grassroots level and help customize strategies based on the unique needs of different areas and populations. Moreover, the consortium will also involve members of the covered populations, who will play a significant role in ensuring that the

consortium's initiatives are responsive to the needs of those who are most affected by the digital divide.

The statewide Digital Connectivity Advisory Committee and Broadband Advisory Committee have been playing an important role over the past two years. Their expertise, strategic guidance, and oversight have helped the State to develop a successful approach to broadband deployment and digital connectivity. As we move towards the consortium model, the committee members can continue to play a crucial role in ensuring our efforts remain effective and sustainable. Additionally, CAIs are important access points for digital resources and services, and their involvement in the consortium will be essential in expanding and maintaining these services. Their presence will ensure that the consortium's actions are based on both practical, day-to-day experiences and high-level strategic insights.

Two key strategies underpin this objective. The first strategy emphasizes the support and development of local capacity through the consortium. The consortium will focus on collective efforts to gather and analyze data, address existing digital gaps, and capitalize on emerging opportunities in digital connectivity, thereby co-creating solutions that incorporate each stakeholder's unique strengths and perspectives. The second strategy aims to build collaboration among State, local, and nonprofit entities, uniting their efforts to create a cohesive digital connectivity framework. Georgia's envisioned statewide digital connectivity consortium represents a multifaceted collaborative network designed to unite diverse entities. These strategies and objectives ensure that the consortium effectively spurs partnership opportunities and enhances digital connectivity capacities across Georgia.

2.3.2.5.3 Objective 5.C: Establish a Digital Connectivity Insights Hub

This objective aims to establish a Digital Connectivity Insights Hub as a central repository for synthesizing and analyzing data from various State programs. The hub aims to enhance stakeholder access to crucial data, helping pinpoint areas needing more digital connectivity resources and expertise.

The purpose of the Digital Connectivity Insights Hub is to synthesize and analyze data from a variety of sources and serve as a tool for stakeholders such as State agencies, regional planning commissions, local governments, and nonprofit organizations. This will enable them to access and utilize data to identify gaps in digital services and strategize accordingly. By offering insights into the current state of digital connectivity, the hub will significantly support efforts to enhance digital connectivity for all covered populations. It aims to be a catalyst for informed decision-making and policy development, ensuring that resources and efforts are effectively channeled to address the digital needs of communities, particularly those who have historically faced barriers in accessing technology and the internet.

To measure the effectiveness of this initiative, the KPIs will include the frequency of stakeholders accessing the data and the number of users leveraging the hub's data for their local strategies. The baseline for this objective is currently TBD, indicating the initial stage of the project. The short-term goal is establishing this hub, with the long-term vision of expanding its influence and utility. To establish a foundational baseline for the Digital Connectivity Insights Hub, collaboration is essential with key Georgia-based entities such as GTA, DCA, and local governments across the State. Baseline data collection will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

This collaborative approach is aligned with our strategies to create a comprehensive repository of insights and build partnerships among State and local entities. This will empower communities, especially the covered populations, by improving access to high-speed, reliable internet and digital resources. Through this, Georgia aspires to bridge the digital divide, ensuring that all its residents are equipped to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

2.3.2.5.4 Objective 5.D: Monitor the financial sustainability of digital connectivity efforts

This objective aims to monitor and ensure the financial sustainability of digital connectivity initiatives. This is particularly important given the key challenge local communities face: a need for more resources and expertise in this area. The KPI for this objective is to secure a significant increase in funding for digital connectivity initiatives, aiming for an overall 10 percent growth in the short term. In the long term, the focus is to achieve a 25 percent increase in total funding secured relative to the baseline year. This approach encompasses contributions from diverse sources, including state, local, federal, and philanthropic, and emphasizes the importance of sustained and scalable growth in financial support for these initiatives.

The current baseline for funding is TBD; GTA plans to use the Statewide Digital Capacity grant allocation in 2024 as a key part of this baseline. Data collection is underway to explore other potential funding sources. GTA will engage with various state agencies and entities, such as DCA, GDEcD, and local community organizations to gather this information. These collaborations will provide valuable insights and data points for setting realistic and achievable benchmarks and will lay the groundwork for sustainable digital growth and inclusion in the long term. Baseline data collection will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

Although it is not a formal entity, the State Collective plays an important role in meeting this objective's KPIs. The diverse perspectives and resources of the State Collective are pivotal in identifying and leveraging funding opportunities, ensuring a coordinated approach vital for the success and sustainability of the plan's objectives. By pooling their knowledge and capabilities, the State Collective helps drive progress towards meeting the established KPIs and fosters a unified and potent force for sustainable digital connectivity and equity across Georgia.

To directly support the objective of monitoring the financial sustainability of digital connectivity efforts, the strategy is to sustain and grow state and local efforts in digital connectivity. Providing technical assistance, grant-writing expertise, and professional development for key personnel enhances digital initiatives' financial resilience and provides essential resources to the covered populations. Additionally, a strategy to support this objective is to harness actionable data to thoroughly build out the Digital Connectivity Insights Hub. This up-to-date data on covered populations enables organizations to secure and utilize funding effectively.

This approach ensures that a support system is in place to secure and strategically allocate investments, directly aligning with the overarching objective of ensuring long-term financial sustainability in digital connectivity efforts. By strategically equipping communities with the necessary tools and information for securing sustainable funding, these efforts will directly benefit all covered populations, ensuring they have improved and ongoing access to essential digital services, skills training, and connectivity resources.

2.3.2.5.5 Key challenge 5: Measurable objectives table
Short-term and long-term goals, unless otherwise noted, are 5-year and 10-year goals.

Measurable objective	KPI	Baseline (current state)	Short-term goal	Long-term goal	Data source
5.A: Establish local digital connectivity plans	Number of county and city digital connectivity plans	1	20	50	GTA data collection
5.B: Establish a statewide digital connectivity consortium	Number of consortium convening events per year	0	6 per year	8 per year	GTA data collection
	Number of participating consortium members	TBD[90]	TBD	TBD	
5.C: Establish a Digital Connectivity Insights Hub	Usefulness of Digital Connectivity Insights hub data to stakeholder and partner organizations	TBD[91]	TBD	TBD	GTA data collection

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[90] GTA will determine short- and long-term goals for consortium membership once baseline number of participating members is defined. Baseline data collection will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

[91] GTA will work with the statewide Digital Connectivity Advisory Committee and partner organizations serving covered populations to get feedback on information needed in the hub, set short-term and long-term goals, and to track the relevance of data in the hub and usefulness of the hub over time. Baseline data collection will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

Measurable objective	KPI	Baseline (current state)	Short-term goal	Long-term goal	Data source
5.D: Monitor the financial sustainability of digital connectivity efforts	Amount of funding secured by stakeholders annually for digital connectivity initiatives, distinguishing between state, local, federal, and philanthropic sources	TBD[92]	Baseline + 10%	Baseline + 25%	GTA data collection

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[92] GTA is gathering baseline data in coordination with state agencies and entities, such as DCA, GDEcD, and local community organizations. Baseline data collection will be completed during the first year of the DE Capacity Award implementation.

3   Current state of digital connectivity

This section describes the current state of digital connectivity in Georgia, as documented through rigorous and comprehensive data collection and outreach efforts. It describes the resources and relationships available to GTA to promote digital connectivity; presents detailed asset inventories related to Digital Equity and broadband adoption, affordability, and access; and presents a needs assessment.

3.1   Asset inventory

This section identifies assets that promote digital connectivity for each of the State's covered populations, including resources, programs, plans, and strategies from public and private entities. Assets may be leveraged by the State in its implementation plan.

3.1.1   Digital connectivity assets by covered population

Through its outreach and research, GTA has identified key digital connectivity assets that support covered populations in the State, including workforce development training and employment services related to broadband adoption; technical assistance programs aimed at supporting digital connectivity; and nonprofits, partnerships, and coalitions that work toward digital connectivity.

Table 8 lists a selection of representative digital connectivity assets and indicates the primary population(s) they serve; additional assets can be found in Appendix A: Asset inventory – additional assets. Note that the category for "Language barrier" includes individuals who are English learners and individuals who have a low literacy level.

Table 8. Digital connectivity assets by covered population(s)

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
AARP Georgia	Senior Planet, the flagship program of AARP charity affiliate Older Adults Technology Services (OATS), offers free online technology and computer classes for AARP members.		x						
Accelerate: Atlanta	Accelerate: Atlanta brings together civic, learning, and corporate partners to provide skills across the spectrum of digital proficiency to build a more inclusive workforce for all. The program empowers underserved communities to close the digital divide in the growing workforce. It provides digital skills to promote economic uplift for Atlanta's populations with the highest susceptibility to automation and the impact of Covid-19. Digital fluency will ensure that they can keep up with advances in AI and machine learning.	x				x	x	x	
Advanced Technology Development Center at Georgia Tech	This state-funded, university-affiliated technology startup incubator provides support, resources, and mentorship to help launch and scale technology companies in Georgia.[93]								
Albany State University	Albany State University received a $2.9 million dollar Connecting Minority Communities grant in 2022 from NTIA to address the growing demand for broadband connectivity in the Albany community while establishing a foundation for future distance learning at the University.[94]	x						x	x
Atlanta Housing	The Achieving Connectivity to Create Equity and Self Sufficiency (ACCESS) program connects those in need to training from private partners.[95]	x	x		x	x	x	x	

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[93] ATDC, https://atdc.org/.

[94] NTIA, "Biden Administration Announces More Than $2.9 Million in Internet for All Grant to Albany State University," Internet For All, November 22, 2022, https://ntia.gov/press-release/2022/biden-administration-announces-more-29-million-internet-all-grant-albany-state.

[95] "Digital Inclusion," Atlanta Housing, https://www.atlantahousing.org/digitalinclusion/.

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
Atlanta Housing – Digital Leadership Academy	The Digital Leadership Academy is a free education and certification program that teaches high-demand technology skills, greatly increasing the employability of each graduate in the IT sector. This 16-week pilot program launched in February 2021 and provides students with the devices and connectivity needed to create a fully immersive educational experience. Partners include TechBridge, Diversity Cyber Council, Braintrust, WrightNow Solutions, and Generation USA.	x					x	x	
Atlanta Police Foundation At-Promise Centers	The At-Promise Initiative's mission is to reduce youth crime by diverting susceptible young people from criminal activity toward a productive life outside the criminal justice system. Atlanta Police Foundation has established a network of three At-Promise Centers (Westside, Southside, Southwest) with AT&T Connected Learning Centers.	x		x			x	x	
Atlanta Regional Workforce Development Board	ARWDB is responsible for providing policy guidance for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Service Area 7, representing Cherokee, Clayton, Douglas, Fayette, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale counties. There are two standing committees that support the ARWDB – NextGen (Youth) Committee, and the Executive Committee.[96]								
Atlanta Technical College	The College received a $3 million award from NTIA in 2023 through the Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program to improve its broadband infrastructure, increase the number of devices available to students through its lending program, and offer digital skills training for senior citizens in the community through its Continuing Education Division.	x			x		x	x	
Bank On Georgia	The goal of Bank On is to ensure that everyone has access to	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

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[96] Atlanta Regional Workforce Development Board, https://atlantaregional.org/board-committee-portal/committees/atlanta-regional-workforce-development-board/.

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
	safe and affordable financial products and services. Bank On Georgia campaign leadership has been engaged in GTA meetings and convenings throughout the state, raising awareness of the need for a greater focus on "Digital Financial Literacy" as part of Georgia's digital equity plan. Bank On serves all covered populations of focus within the plan and more.								
Boys & Girls Clubs of Georgia	The Boys & Girls Clubs of Georgia is a collective of 36 Boys & Girls Clubs organizations across Georgia that work together as one "movement" to provide out-of-school youth development and character building to over 79,000 children in Georgia.	x						x	
CareerRise, Inc.	CareerRise invests in planning, shaping, and piloting employer-led, demand-driven partnerships in Atlanta's fastest-growing industries. Managed by the United Way of Greater Atlanta, CareerRise works with local employers, educators, and philanthropy and nonprofit partners to strengthen its partnerships, develop common solutions to the region's labor issues, and collectively invest in Atlanta's workforce.	x					x	x	
Circles of West Georgia	This local chapter of the nonprofit Circles USA, which takes a community-driven approach to ending poverty through long-term, one-on-one support,[97] offers digital skills training for workforce development.	x							
Clark Atlanta University	The University offers a STEM enrichment program in partnership with Verizon Wireless' Verizon Innovative Learning initiative.[98]							x	

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[97] Circles of West Georgia, https://circlesofwestga.com/.

[98] "STEM enrichment program at Clark Atlanta lights the way," Verizon press release, October 5, 2021, https://www.verizon.com/about/news/stem-enrichment-program-clark-atlanta.

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
Clayton County	Clayton County offers several programs through its community institutions, as detailed in its Digital Equity and Broadband Strategic Plan. The Clayton County Public Library offers technical assistance for devices and software, access to Wi-Fi and devices, a Bookmobile with Wi-Fi, and hotspot borrowing. Clayton County Public Schools extend learning beyond the classroom through college and career preparation. Clayton County Senior Services supports adult literacy by offering computer tablets for seniors' home use.	x	x					x	x
Coastal ReEntry and Veterans Coalition Inc.	This local nonprofit offers one-on-one, walk-in computer training and assistance with internet connectivity issues, use of computing devices and software, online job searches or applications, and accessing public services, health services, and financial services online.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Columbus Technical College	The College provides Northstar Digital Literacy training, desktop computers, laptops, or tablets and technical support for adult education students obtaining a high school diploma/equivalency. The budget is under $25,000 funded by the Office of Adult Education. The program serves Muscogee, Talbot, Stewart, Quitman, Harris, and Chattahoochee counties. With over 100 people served in 2022, the target is to serve over 500 people over the life of the project.	x				x		x	x
Compudopt	This national nonprofit provides refurbished devices, low-cost internet services, and tech education for under-resourced youth and their communities.[99]	x							
Cxmmunity	Through STEAM development, this Atlanta nonprofit supports under-served minority youth in pursuing careers in the esports and gaming industry "so that there is an equal opportunity as new jobs and professions are being	x						x	

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[99] Compudopt Atlanta, https://www.compudopt.org/atlanta-wifi.

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
	created."[100]								
Connect the Dots for Digital Equity	This partnership between Inspiredu, Comcast, and the Fulton County Library System, works to bridge the digital divide in Fulton County by providing free laptops, digital literacy training, tech support, and low or no-cost internet to qualifying families.	x					x		
Digitunity	This national nonprofit takes an "ecosystem approach" to promote device ownership as a cornerstone of bridging the digital divide. 71 organizations in Georgia are part of Digitunity's Digital Opportunity Network, making them eligible to receive donations of computers.[101]Atlanta is also one of 10 U.S. cities who participated in a pilot project to distribute free or low-cost refurbished devices with tech support and digital skills training to K-12 students.[102]	x							
Emory University School of Medicine	The Emory University School of Medicine offers support through access to telehealth. This planned effort will include programs addressing Digital Navigators, broadband access, and creating accessible and inclusive internet content. Key components include: 1) access to health information, 2) telehealth and remote healthcare, 3) online health support communities, and 4) health tracking and remote patient monitoring. The program will also include remote education and training for healthcare professionals, and health promotion and preventive measures.	x							x
Empower Southwest Georgia	Empower SW GA provides many services to its area's constituents, including supporting applicants for ACP, hosting Leadership Forums for ISPs and community members,	x	x	x		x	x		x

[100] "About," Cxmmunity, https://www.cxmmunity.co/about.

[101] "Digital Opportunity Network," Digitunity, https://digitunity.org/get-involved/digital-opportunity-network/#see_network.

[102] "Addressing the Homework Gap," Digitunity, https://digitunity.org/our-programs/addressing-the-homework-gap/.

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
	broadband workforce development, and educating consumers about internet subsidies and plans for the community. It has initiated planning to support broadband expansion in counties including Clay, Early, Miller, Randolph, Schley, Stewart, Terrell, and Webster. It has been selected as a host for the American Connection Corps Broadband Program. The Fellow supports applicants to the ACP, conducts a leadership forum, organizes workshops for builders and construction leadership for broadband, serves as a public advocate, educates consumers on broadband access, and other duties. The Fellow also works to establish a similar group with county administrators in the region.								
Empowr	This Atlanta-based nonprofit "uplifts the Black community by creating the school-to-career pipeline,"[103] working to end generational poverty cycles by training students in software development and placing them in high-paying technology careers.	x						x	
Fort Valley State University (FVSU)	With a $3 million dollar Connecting Minority Communities grant received in 2023 from NTIA for its "Communi-versity: Piloting an Ecosystem for Digital Equity" project, FVSU will work with community organizations to expand broadband connectivity and provide digital skills training for students and residents in Peach County, including establishing local "broadband hubs" staffed with TechNavigators.	x						x	x
Free I.T. Athens	By distributing recycled, refurbished computers and advocating for free software, this Athens nonprofit seeks to eliminate digital inequality.[104]	x							
Fulton Atlanta	Founded in 1991 to provide a wide array of services to low-	x							

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[103] "Our Vision," Empowr, https://www.empowrco.org/our-vision.
[104] Free I.T. Athens, https://www.freeitathens.org/.

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
Community Action Authority (FACAA)	income individuals and families in the City of Atlanta and Fulton County, FACAA offers programs and services that enable individuals and families to emerge from economic despair, prevent homelessness, and enhance educational goals for an improved quality of life.								
Fulton County Schools	The U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE) Digital Equity & Opportunity vision[105] includes providing devices to students, teaching digital literacy, and creating an open education ecosystem populated by instructional materials that are not subject to copyright laws, proprietary systems, or other access barriers. Now supported by the U.S. DOE, Fulton County Schools, serving approximately 96,000 students, has since 2014 been developing a "Student-focused Learning"[106] plan that includes providing digital devices to every student, subject to a Readiness Assessment.	x				x	x	x	
Georgia 4-H	The 4-H Tech Changemakers project uses an adult-youth partnership model to empower teens as teachers of digital literacy in areas lacking broadband internet access. Georgia 4-H Tech Changemakers held 91 hands-on classes, workshops, and trainings led by 88 trained 4-H'ers from 15 counties during the 2021-22 grant cycle. The most popular topics included responsible online behavior, email communication, online safety tips and video conference communication. Partners include Microsoft and UGA Extension.[107]		x						x
Georgia Analytics	The Georgia Analytics dashboard reports traffic and					x	x		

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[105] "Priorities," U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Technology, https://tech.ed.gov/priorities/.

[106] "Student Focused Learning," Fulton County Schools, https://www.fultonschools.org/studentfocusedlearning.

[107] "Digital Ambassadors," Georgia 4-H, https://georgia4h.org/programs/focus-areas/agriculture-stem/science-technology-engineering-math/digital-ambassadors/.

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
state website dashboard	performance data for participating state websites based on quality assurance, accessibility, and search engine optimization. See: https://analytics.georgia.gov/								
Georgia Center of Innovation	The Georgia Center of Innovation helps startups in telehealth and related areas to increase innovation.[108]		x			x			
Georgia College & State University	The designated public liberal arts university of the University System of Georgia. The Corporate/Continuing Education department is very interested in digital literacy efforts.	x			x	x	x	x	
Georgia Council on American Indian Concerns	The Council address the concerns of Georgia's American Indians. It fosters cultural heritage of American Indians in Georgia, advises state and local governments on proposed and existing policy and legislation and other matters affecting the American Indian community, and assists with American Indian burial and repatriation. Among its major projects, it supports a Vocational Rehabilitation Program that assist American Indians with disabilities to find gainful employment, which is aligned with state digital connectivity goals for covered populations.					x		x	x
Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC)	GDC provides digital skills and literacy, data privacy and cybersecurity, devices (laptops, computers, tablets), and broadband access to incarcerated individuals in state prisons. It provides training for teachers of broadband skills and digital literacy, as well as developing and distributing accessible content directed at populations with specific needs. Inmate services programs provide access to academic education and reentry services. The Career, Technical and			x		x	x		

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[108] "Digital Health Support & Training in Georgia," Center of Innovation, https://www.georgia.org/center-of-innovation/areas-of-expertise/information-technology/digital-health.

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
	Higher Education (CTHE) Unit prepares inmates for employment including in computer technology and repair.[109]								
Georgia Department of Education	The Georgia Department of Education provides support for the ACP, devices, hotspots, digital skills and digital literacy training, and digital accessibility to its clients. GaDOE also provides funding to support programs that provide broadband infrastructure, devices, and/or subsidies to support broadband affordability. In addition, GaDOE has 17 career clusters that provide paths for districts to use with their students.	x				x	x	x	x
Georgia Department of Education – Georgia Standards	GaDOE maintains a free, public website, GeorgiaStandards.Org (GSO),[110] delivering access to Georgia's educational standards, including standards for digital literacy for school-age children.[111]	x				x	x	x	x
Georgia Department of Education – Restart Guide for Connectivity and Devices	Georgia's Restart Guide for Connectivity and Devices supplied school districts and teachers with important information to address digital and hybrid learning environments.	x				x	x	x	x
Georgia Department of Human Services – Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS)	DFCS provides numerous support services and programs to help Georgia families and children in need. Social benefit programs including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) are managed through the Georgia Gateway	x			x	x	x	x	x

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[109] "Career, Technical and Higher Education," Georgia Department of Corrections, https://gdc.georgia.gov/organization/about-gdc/divisions-and-org-chart/inmate-services-division/career-technical-and-higher.

[110] "Georgia Standards of Excellence," Georgia Department of Education, https://www.georgiastandards.org/.

[111] "K-5 Digital Literacy," Georgia Department of Education, https://www.georgiastandards.org/Georgia-Standards/Pages/ELA-K-5-Webinar-Digital-Literacy.aspx; "6-12 Digital Literacy," Georgia Department of Education, https://www.georgiastandards.org/Georgia-Standards/Pages/ELA-6-12-Webinar-Digital-Literacy.aspx.

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
	online portal.[112] Under DFCS, the Cultivating the Rising Experienced Worker (C.R.E.W.) Program serves as an employability training and career exploration connection for youth in foster care.								
Georgia Department of Veterans Services (GDVS)	GDVS provides education and training services through the Veterans Education and Training Division.[113]				x				
Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce	The Chamber promotes and supports the domestic and international economic development of Hispanic businesses and individuals and serves as a link between non-Hispanic entities and the Hispanic market.[114] It offers numerous relevant programs including "CRECER para mujeres" (growth for women), a program to support small businesses owned by women.[115]						x	x	
Georgia High School High Tech Program	The Georgia Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, Inc., the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, and local school systems have partnered to launch a community-based program, active at over 50 high schools in Georgia, that connects youth with disabilities with resources and experiences to help them transition to post-secondary education and employment.[116]					x			x
Georgia Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled	Georgia Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (GLS), as part of GPLS, promotes the use of assistive technology and accessible reading materials for those who are blind or					x	x		

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[112] Georgia Gateway, https://gateway.ga.gov/access/.

[113] "Education and Training," GDVS, https://veterans.georgia.gov/education-training.

[114] "About GHCC," GHCC, https://ghcc.org/en/about-ghcc/.

[115] "CRECER para Mujeres," GHCC, https://ghcc.org/en/crecer-para-mujeres/; translated page at https://ghcc-org.translate.goog/en/crecer-para-mujeres/?_x_tr_sl=auto&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en.

[116] "Georgia High School High Tech Program," Georgia Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, Inc, https://www.gacomm-hsht.org/.

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
	whose physical abilities require the use of books and magazines in audio format or in braille.								
Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS)	GPLS offers statewide programs to address internet availability and affordability, as well as providing digital literacy, data privacy and cybersecurity, and online accessibility and inclusivity programs. With a budget of under $25,000, it served over 100 people in 2022 and has a target of serving over 500 people over the life of the project.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Georgia Veterans Education Career Transition Resource Center (VECTR)	Georgia VECTR Center serves as a gateway for veterans' reentry into Georgia's public postsecondary educational systems and workforce. It is designed to serve veterans and their families through career counseling, educational coaching, workforce training, and more.[117]				x				
Global Partnership for Telehealth (GPTH)	GPTH, a nonprofit, offers simple and affordable telehealth technology solutions that bring much-needed healthcare resources to urban and rural communities. GPTH supports clinical and nonclinical sites in 10 states as well as international projects through its telehealth platform Pathways, training, and other services. The organization facilitates roughly 40,000 telehealth engagements per year.[118]	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Goodwill of North Georgia	Goodwill of North Georgia supports internet availability and affordability by providing digital literacy training; desktop computers, laptops, or tablets; and technical support. The program serves all covered populations except seniors. It has a budget of between $250,000 and $499,999 and served over 100 people in 2022, with a target of serving over 500 people over the life of the project.	x		x	x	x	x	x	x

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[117] The Georgia VECTR Center, https://www.gavectr.org/index.html.
[118] Global Partnership for Telehealth, https://gpth.org/.

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
Hope for Youth, Inc. (HYPE)	This nonprofit provides training and support to help girls of color enter technology and computing careers, as well as professional opportunities to support talent retention of women of color in the tech industry.[119]							x	
Inspiredu	Inspiredu is an Atlanta-based empowerment organization whose offerings include digital literacy programs. It drives digital inclusion and literacy for Georgia families, communities, and schools. The Learning Spark Initiative partners with Georgia schools to facilitate interactive workshops that leverage technology to help families responsibly access and utilize digital tools for learning. This program also helps families learn about and apply for internet subsidies like the ACP. The program provides digital literacy support; desktop computers, laptops, or tablets; and technical support for individuals who primarily reside in a rural area, members of a racial or ethnic minority group, and individuals who live in a covered household (i.e., household income is below 150 percent of the poverty level). The statewide program has a budget of over $600,000 and served over 100 people in 2022, targeting over 600 people for the life of project.	x	x			x	x	x	x
Integrity Transformations Community Development Corporation (CDC)	Atlanta-based Integrity CDC's Digital Skills Development class is an entry-level course designed to introduce users to basic computer principles and requires little to no previous experience. The class provides basic information technology (IT) literacy and ensures one understands the different terminology and the functionality of the basic Microsoft Office Suite. Students learn how to access the software and	x	x	x					

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[119] "About," HYPE, https://gethype.org/about/.

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
	their documents from a desktop, laptop, or their personal phone.								
Latin American Association (LAA)	The Latino Digital Equity Centers Program provides ESL, digital literacy, digital skills, and workforce development programs to Latino communities. LAA also offers courses and workshops for girls and young women through the Tech4Girls program, designed to encourage the pursuit of careers in STEM and provide female entrepreneurs with digital skills to grow their businesses.[120]						x	x	
Latino Community Fund of Georgia	This membership organization, which supports Latinx and Hispanic communities in Georgia,[121] offers free or low-cost one-on-one training and classes by appointment in basic and intermediate digital skills, as well as designated digital navigators.	x					x	x	x
Legacy Harvest Foundation	Equips communities across Georgia with the financial resources, economic development, and career coaching they need to break down barriers of opportunity. Provides Digital Skills @ 50+ AARP Foundation, in collaboration with Older Adults Technology Services (OATS), Step Into Your Future (SIYF)-Youth Program (16-24 Year Olds), and workforce apprenticeship programs.	x	x						
Lift Zones	Lift Zones, located throughout the state, combine 1 Gbps connectivity to over 20 community centers with digital equity programming.[122] Lift Zones are part of the Comcast Project UP initiative.[123] (For the full list of Lift Zones, see Table 41 in Appendix A: Asset inventory – additional assets.)	x	x		x	x	x	x	

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[120] "Computer Classes," Latin American Association, https://thelaa.org/computer-literacy-classes/.
[121] Latino Community Fund Georgia, https://lcfgeorgia.org/.
[122] "Lift Zones," Comcast, https://corporate.comcast.com/impact/digital-equity/lift-zones.
[123] "Project UP," Comcast, https://corporate.comcast.com/impact/project-up.

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
Literacy Action	Based in Atlanta, digital literacy skills and other literacy skills and workforce training. Success Center located in the Peachtree Center is a digitally focused, student-centric adult literacy campus. Provides OATS programs for digital inclusion.	x	x		x		x		
M.E.N.S. Wear Inc. (MWI) Workforce Institute	This Georgia-based nonprofit is "committed to being a workforce development leader focused on reducing the digital skills gap." As an official training partner of Grow with Google, the Institute offers digital skills trainings and Google Career Certificates with a focus on job seekers, small business owners, veterans, individuals aged 55+, and justice-impacted individuals, with limited scholarships available. Classes are available in English and Spanish.[124] Provides devices through a partnership with Compudopt.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM)	MSM received a $4.2 million dollar Connecting Minority Communities grant in 2023 from NTIA to understand the impact increasing technological access and literacy will have on digital health equity. The overall goal of the "From Survivor to Innovator: Digital Health Equity and Community Impact" project is to lead and advance digital health equity.[125]	x				x		x	x
Must Ministries	Workforce development program offers computer skills training and a computer lab to assist in employment searches.[126].	x							

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[124] "Grow with Google," MWI, https://www.menswearinc.org/grow-w-google.

[125] NTIA, "Biden-Harris Administration Announces More Than $175 Million in Internet for All Grants to 61 Minority-Serving Colleges and Universities," Internet For All, February 23, 2023, https://www.internetforall.gov/news-media/biden-harris-administration-announces-more-175-million-internet-all-grants-61-minority.

[126] "Employment Opportunities," Must Ministries, https://www.mustministries.org/workforce-development.

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
Northstar Digital Literacy	Northstar Digital Literacy is a program that defines the basic skills needed to use a computer and the internet in daily life, employment, and higher education. Northstar Digital Skills classes are offered both in-person and online. There are over 75 Northstar locations across the state. (See Appendix A: Asset inventory – additional assets for the full list.)	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Partnership for Inclusive Innovation (PIN)	PIN is a public-private coalition that has galvanized long-term commitments across public and private resources. It serves all of Georgia from urban centers to rural communities. Its definition of "inclusive innovation" increases access and expands geographic, racial, gender and socioeconomic equity and opportunity for all. It combines grantmaking with hands-on program operation.	x						x	x
Phoenix Elite Solutions LLC	Provides technology consultation and training for individuals and private and public entities to help individuals with blindness or low vision integrate into the workforce.[127]					x			
Piedmont Regional Library System	The Piedmont Regional Library System offers computer training and device checkout at all 10 libraries in the regional system. Its programs address digital literacy, device access, and online accessibility and inclusivity. With a budget of under $25,000, it served over 100 people in 2022.	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Reentry Partnership Housing (RPH)	A collaboration between the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the Georgia Department of Community Supervision (DCS), the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC), and the Council of Accountability Court Judges (CACJ), this program provides short-term housing to help returning citizens achieve stability and self-sufficiency.[128]	x		x	x	x			

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[127] "Tracey Jackson," National Technical Assistance Center, https://www.ntac.blind.msstate.edu/spotlights/2020/tracey-jackson.
[128] "Reentry Partnership Housing," DCA, https://www.dca.ga.gov/safe-affordable-housing/homeless-special-needs-housing/reentry-partnership-housing-rph.

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
Returning Veterans Task Force (RVTF)	RVTF is an intra-state task force that investigates how Georgia's state government agencies can coordinate services to better assist service members transitioning from active duty back into society.[129]				x				
Saving Our Sons & Sisters International (SOSSI)	SOSSI, a nonprofit, collaboratively engages youth, families, and community partners in a holistic approach focused on "educational resources … to succeed in the digital age" to reduce dropouts and increase access to STEM workforce opportunities.[130]	x	x		x				
STE(A)M Truck	Mobile learning labs bring hands-on STEAM learning experiences to communities that may not have access to these opportunities.[131]	x							
Technical College System of Georgia	TCSG provides technical training certification for fiber optics technicians and other programs available through the 22 TCSG schools throughout the state. For example, Wiregrass Technical College provides a certified Fiber Optic Technician (CFOT) Certification.	x			x		x	x	x
Technologists of Color (ToC)	ToC strives to create a cohesive and thriving community of African Americans in technology. It sponsors meet-ups, informs its community on opportunities, helps create a pipeline of young technologist through training, and provides opportunities for technology professionals to give back.[132]							x	
Technology Association of Georgia Education (TAG-Ed)	TAG-Ed provides professional development and workforce development programs statewide.	x			x	x	x	x	x
TechBridge	Provides enterprise-grade software at below market cost to	x							

[129] "Returning Veterans Task Force," Georgia Department of Veterans Service, https://veterans.georgia.gov/rvtf.
[130] SOSSI, https://iamsossi.org/.
[131] STE(A)M Truck, https://www.steamtruck.org/.
[132] Technologists of Color, https://techsofcolor.org/#aboutus.

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
	nonprofits working in the core areas of social justice, hunger relief, homeless support, and workforce development,[133] as well as workforce development to help youth[134] and unemployed and underemployed adults[135] enter technology careers.								
TechSmart Learning for Seniors	TechSmart Learning for Seniors is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the health, wellbeing, and life expectancy of older adults in Greater Atlanta through the use of technology. It offers one-on-one and group digital skills training.[136]		X						
Thrive Regional Partnership	Thrive Regional Partnership serves five counties in Northwest Georgia (Dade, Walker, Catoosa, Whitfield, and Murray). Through both the Regional Broadband Alliance and the Connected Communities program, Thrive promotes the availability and affordability of internet, digital literacy, and online accessibility and inclusivity. It served over 100 people in 2022, with a target of over 500 people over the life of the project.	x	x						x
Thrive Regional Partnership – Connected Communities	Connected Communities programs address availability and affordability of internet for individuals who live in a covered household (i.e., household income is lower than 150 percent of the poverty level). With a budget of under $25,000, the organization served 26-50 people in 2022 and has a target to serve 101-250 people over the life of the project.	x							x
Unite Georgia	Unite Georgia is a coordinated care network consisting of healthcare, government, nonprofit, and other organizations.	x							

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[133] "About," TechBridge, https://techbridge.org/about-us/.

[134] "TCP Youth," TechBridge, https://techbridge.org/programs/workforce-development/technology-career-program/tcp-youth/.

[135] "TechBridge Technology Careers Program," TechBridge, https://techbridge.org/programs/workforce-development/technology-career-program/.

[136] "Training," TechSmart Learning for Seniors, https://techsmartseniors.org/training/.

Asset name	Description	Low-income	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural
	These network partners use Unite Us' software to securely identify, deliver, and pay for services that address the needs of individuals within their communities. The network is supported by Unite Us team members focused on customer and community engagement, network health and optimization, and user support. Joining the network is at no cost for community-based organizations and many organizations that are considered part of the safety net, like community health centers, Tribal clinics, and mental health centers.[137]								
University of Georgia Cooperative Extension	UGA Extension provides a wide range of programs for youth development, families, and those living in rural areas. The Extension began offering select programming virtually during the Covid-19 pandemic and continues to host online classes available to participants statewide and nationally.[138] It is also a partner in 4H Tech Changemakers program.	x							x
Urban League of Greater Atlanta	The Urban League provides computer training and workforce development programs.[139]							x	
Working Concepts Inc.	As part of its career training programming, this nonprofit offers digital literacy workshops covering basic skills including online privacy and security.[140]	x			x	x			

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[137] Unite Georgia, https://uniteus.com/networks/georgia/.

[138] Joshua Paine and Maria Lameiras, "Extension sees high demand for digital delivery," University of Georgia news release, June 4, 2020, https://news.uga.edu/extension-high-demand-online-programs/.

[139] "Computer Training," Urban League of Greater Atlanta, https://ulgatl.org/computer-training/.

[140] "Services," Working Concepts Inc., https://www.workingconceptsinc.org/services.

3.1.2 Existing digital connectivity plans

Numerous plans by cities in Georgia address the need for broadband connectivity either directly or indirectly as an enabler for economic, education, health, and quality of life goals. As discussed in Section 2, Georgia began requiring communities to include a broadband element in their comprehensive plans in 2018, and by the end of 2022 nearly all had done so. As of June 2023, 56 communities in the State have received the Broadband Ready designation, indicating that their comprehensive plan promotes broadband deployment. Many communities that have not yet been designated as Broadband Ready stated that recognition is a goal, and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) is providing outreach to directly assist those seeking the designation.

Several of Georgia's Regional Commissions reference the need for increased connectivity in recent regional planning documents, but do not include specific goals for digital connectivity. Multiple plans identify broadband infrastructure expansion as a priority need, such as the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and Regional Plan (2022)[141] and the Coastal Georgia Regional Commission's Georgia Coastal Regional Plan 2022. [142] Some Commissions are taking steps to support or encourage broadband deployment. The Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission, for example, notes that it has helped several counties "acquire funding for broadband" as of 2023,[143] and the Heart of Georgia-Altamaha Regional Commission states in its 2022 Regional Plan Annual Report[144] that it plans to host a broadband summit in 2023. Georgia's three state-recognized tribes do not currently have digital connectivity plans.

At the municipal level, the City of Tucker, located within the Atlanta metro area, includes Digital Media as a subsector of the Professional Services industry to target for workforce development in its Economic Development Strategic Plan (2023).[145] While several counties have programs and initiatives for digital equity (see Table 10. Existing digital connectivity programs), comprehensive county-level plans for digital equity have not yet been developed, except for Clayton County.

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[141] "Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Regional Plan 2022-2026," Georgia Mountains Regional Commission, https://www.gmrc.ga.gov/_files/ugd/c74cd0_094dd45d45144c8da4246abe327c7326.pdf.
[142] "Coastal Georgia Regional Plan 2022," Coastal Georgia Regional Commission, https://crc-planning-hub-segrass.hub.arcgis.com/documents/34dec8321f4a418ebfccc4417e45a148/explore.
[143] "Draft 2023 Regional Work Program Update," Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission, https://csrarc.ga.gov/sites/default/files/csrarc/planning/2023_regional_work_program_update_-_draft.pdf.
[144] "Regional Plan Annual Report 2022," Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, https://www.dca.ga.gov/sites/default/files/hogarc_regional_plan_annual_report_2022_adopted.pdf.
[145] "City of Tucker Economic Development Strategic Plan," City of Tucker, https://cms7files.revize.com/tucker/document_center/economic-dev/Tucker%20EDSP%202023.pdf.

Many public housing authorities and county and city public school districts throughout the state also address the need for broadband access, equity, and full digital connectivity in strategic plans.

The table below, which is a representative rather than exhaustive list, highlights key plans that contain strategies for improved broadband access and/or digital connectivity at a city, county, or statewide level. These plans, which have informed the preparation of this Plan, include:

Table 9. Existing digital connectivity plans

Plan author and name	Description
Atlanta Public Schools Strategic Plan (2020-2025)	The Atlanta Public Schools' strategic plan[146] emphasizes equity as at the core of its plan, has developed an equity policy guiding document, and created the Center for Equity and Social Justice (which includes the Office of Equity Strategy & Coherence) to support this goal, with digital equity as a component.[147]
Atlanta Housing – Atlanta Housing Strategic Plan (2023)	Atlanta Housing's strategic plan highlights its Achieving Connectivity to Create Equity and Self Sufficiency (ACCESS) digital inclusion program, which connects those in need to training from private partners and highlights digital literacy training for seniors as part of the continuum of care.[148]
Clayton County Office of Digital Equity – County Digital Equity and Broadband Strategic Plan	Clayton County (population: 297,100; 18.9 percent of population in poverty)[149] has an Office of Digital Equity[150] and is creating a county-level Broadband and Digital Equity Plan.[151]
City Schools of Decatur Five-Year Strategic Plan (2023-2028)	As part of its equity-focused strategic plan,[152] City Schools of Decatur plan to implement "future-ready classrooms" to "ensure every student and employee has equitable access to technology resources."[153]
Decatur County Schools Board of Education Strategic Plan (2016-2023)	Decatur County Schools' strategic plan, updated annually, includes technology to support teaching and learning as a strategic goal area, with an objective to ensure "all students have access to technology and use it to be actively engaged in the learning process."[154]

[146] "Atlanta Public Schools Strategic Plan 2020-2025," Atlanta Public Schools, https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/strategicplan.
[147] "Equity," Atlanta Public Schools, https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/equity.
[148] "Atlanta Housing Strategic Plan: FY2023-2027," Atlanta Housing, https://www.atlantahousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Strategic-Plan-Fiscal-Year-2023-2027.pdf.
[149] U.S. Census, "QuickFacts: Clayton County, Georgia," https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/claytoncountygeorgia.
[150] "Clayton County's Digital Equity Initiative," Clayton County, https://digitalequity.claytoncountyga.gov/.
[151] "Clayton to Create Digital Equity Plan and Celebrate Digital Inclusion Week," Clayton County news release, September 26, 2022, https://digitalequity.claytoncountyga.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2022_0926-News-Release-Digital-Inclusion-Week.pdf.
[152] "CSD Strategic Plan 2023-2028," City Schools of Decatur, https://www.csdecatur.net/Page/5133.
[153] "Strategic Plan: Our How," City Schools of Decatur, https://www.csdecatur.net/Page/5135.
[154] "Decatur County Schools Board of Education Strategic Plan 2016-2023," Decatur County Board of Education, https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1653349204/boedcboecom/ou5tc9vvmkl4egqbijfv/DCBOEStrategicPlan2016-2023.pdf.

Plan author and name	Description
Georgia Department of Community Affairs and Georgia Technology Authority – Georgia Broadband Annual Report (2022)	GTA conducted a six-month engagement with industry experts which included dozens of meetings with Georgia stakeholders to update the State's strategy. Many of the findings and recommendations from this effort are summarized within this report.[155]
Georgia Technology Authority – Georgia Broadband Strategy (2022)	GTA developed this statewide broadband strategy as a tool for understanding Georgia's broadband needs and effectively using public resources to narrow broadband gaps. The strategy considers the potential short- and long-term effects on free-market conditions, with a particular goal of ensuring that the State's efforts facilitate and support private market outcomes and create opportunity for private sector entities.
Lowndes County School System Strategic Plan (2023-2028)	Lowndes County Schools plan to convene a committee to create a PreK-12 digital literacy plan by May 2024, to be implemented by August 2025. The district's strategic goals around technology also include providing technology classes for families in the district and creating "makerspaces" in school media centers.[156]

3.1.3   Existing digital connectivity programs

Some municipal and regional entities across the state are engaged in initiatives related to digital connectivity as documented in Table 8 and Table 41. The table below includes municipal digital connectivity programs; and existing State policies, mapping, and other technological resources used to inform broadband-related activities.

Table 10. Existing digital connectivity programs

Program name	Description
ACP Act Now campaign	In May 2023, GTA launched a statewide initiative in partnership with EducationSuperHighway and 100 coalition partners to promote enrollment in the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The program includes an online tool available in four languages to aid ACP enrollment.[157]
ARPA-funded broadband grant program	The State used part of its allocation of State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to address the lack

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[155] Available for download from DCA website: https://broadband.georgia.gov/media/35/download.

[156] "Lowndes County School System Strategic Plan 2023-2028," Lowndes County School System, https://cdnsm5-ss19.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_111657/Image/System%20Information/Lowndes%20County%20Strategic%20Plan%202023-2028.pdf.

[157] [1] "Georgia Technology Authority launches statewide initiative to increase Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) adoption," GTA press release, May 19, 2023, https://gta.georgia.gov/news/2023-05-19/georgia-technology-authority-launches-statewide-initiative-increase-affordable.

Program name	Description
	of broadband service infrastructure in Georgia through a competitive program. Almost $408 million in preliminary awards were announced in 2022, representing more than $738 million when matching funds are contributed. The projects targeted with the awards could serve 183,615 locations, of which 132,050 are currently unserved based on State data.
Broadband Ready Community Certification	Demonstrates that a local unit of government has taken steps to reduce obstacles to broadband infrastructure investment by amending its comprehensive plan to include the promotion of the deployment broadband services and adopting a model ordinance created by the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). 56 communities have achieved Broadband Ready status across the State as of June 2023.
Capital Projects Fund Grant Program	Provides funding for Broadband Infrastructure Projects that reliably meet or exceed download and upload speeds of 100 Mbps (unless impracticable) to unserved homes and businesses in Georgia. Over $234 million in preliminary grant awards were announced in January 2023; when combined with capital matches from the awardees, almost $455 million will be invested to serve over 76,000 locations. A second round of grant program awardees was announced in June 2023, with approximately $15 million allocated.
Clayton County Office of Digital Equity	The Office helps county residents access the ACP and also offers computer training and is creating a strategic plan for the County (see Table 9).
DeKalb County School District (DCSD)	DCSD's equity framework focuses on providing students with access to high quality, relevant, and engaging instruction. Connecting students and families to internet access is a key enabler to this. Digital Dreamers, a comprehensive technology program that provides laptops and devices to every student in the school system.[158]
Fulton County Digital Ambassadors Program	Fulton County's Digital Ambassadors Program is a public-private initiative to promote broadband sign-ups through the ACP. Digital Navigators through the program spread awareness of the ACP and help get residents enrolled around Fulton County.[159]
Fulton County Mobile Career Center	The Workforce Fulton Mobile Career Center uses a van to bring Wi-Fi, computers, and printers to neighborhoods around Fulton County to assist with digital literacy, job searching, job applications, and virtual job fairs.[160]
Georgia Broadband Advisory Committee	In 2018, an advisory committee was formed to aid Georgia's broadband deployment efforts, consisting of a representative group of providers, local governments, electric cooperatives, and state agencies[161] and

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[158] "Digital Dreamers," DeKalb County School District, https://www.dekalbschoolsga.org/digital-dreamers/.
[159] "Fulton County Announces Launch of Digital Ambassador Program to Connect 20,000 Households with Free Broadband Access," Fulton County, https://www.fultoncountyga.gov/news/2022/05/20/launch-of-digital-ambassador-program; "Digital Ambassadors Program," Fulton County, https://www.fultoncountyga.gov/acp.
[160] "Mobile Career Center," Select Fulton, https://selectfultoncounty.com/mobilecareercenter.
[161] "Georgia's Approach to Rural Broadband," GTA, https://gta.georgia.gov/georgias-approach-rural-broadband-1.

Program name	Description
	coordinated by GTA.[162] This collaboration has contributed to streamlining local ordinances, developing the broadband availability map, designing state grant frameworks, as well as providing valuable insights on various state and federal policy matters.[163]
Georgia Broadband Availability Map – Broadband Explorer	An internal, interactive map of broadband availability in the state that has robust mapping regarding funding and federal programs, maintained by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government and updated monthly.
Georgia Broadband Availability Map – Public	A public, interactive map of broadband availability in the state, created by DCA from data submitted by ISPs. Georgia was the first state to map broadband availability at the address level; these data are used to identify the state's unserved locations and identify eligible project areas for broadband grant funding.
Georgia Broadband Program online speed test	Hosted by DCA to equip individuals with the clearest picture possible of internet connectivity quality in Georgia.[164]
Georgia Cyber Center	GTA is responsible for partner coordination at the Georgia Cyber Center, a State-owned facility designed to promote modernization in cybersecurity technology for both the private and public sectors through unique education, training, research, and practical applications. The center is the single largest investment in a cybersecurity facility by a state government to date, with the goal to "provide our State and the nation with a decisive advantage in cyberspace."[165]
Georgia Department of Education – K-12 Connectivity Program	GaDOE provides ACP enrollment support services to school districts through the K-12 Connectivity Program. Districts can perform their own outreach using resources provided by the GaDOE or utilize a call center created through the program; the call center also runs an ACP enrollment support hotline for families.
Georgia Department of Education – Office of Rural Education and Innovation	In 2021, the Department also established an Office of Rural Education and Innovation, which will work with low-wealth school districts in high poverty/distressed regions of Georgia to tackle barriers that impact academic outcomes and opportunities for students—including lack of broadband access.[166]
Georgia Department of Education – STEM/STEAM Georgia	Local Education Agencies (LEA) in the state can apply for grant funding through GaDOE to implement a STEM/STEAM program as developed by GADOE's Career, Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) division,

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[162] "About Georgia Broadband," GTA, https://gta.georgia.gov/broadband/about-georgia-broadband.

[163] "Georgia's Approach to Rural Broadband," GTA, https://gta.georgia.gov/georgias-approach-rural-broadband-1.

[164] "Speed Test," Department of Community Affairs, https://broadband.georgia.gov/speed-test.

[165] "Vision/Mission," Georgia Cyber Innovation and Training Center, https://www.gacybercenter.org/about/vision-mission/.

[166] "Rural Education and Innovation," GaDOE, https://www.gadoe.org/rural.

Program name	Description
	which involves an integrated curriculum that is project based and student centered.[167]
Georgia Digital Connectivity Advisory Committee	In 2022, GTA formed an advisory committee to identify digital connectivity needs and gaps and to support the State's digital connectivity planning and capacity development. Members were selected based on proximity to covered populations, per National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) and NTIA guidance, and subject matter experts in areas and for populations. This group advises the State on the creation of its digital connectivity vision and objectives and will assist with creating the State's digital connectivity capacity grant program.
Georgia Student Connect Program	As part of GaDOE's K-12 Connectivity program, the first phase of the Georgia Student Connect Program connected students by providing hotspots with free internet service to households with a K-12 student living in low-income housing. The program is now expanded to help families enroll in the ACP[168] by providing support services to school districts—including a call center that can conduct outreach to families and runs an ACP support hotline. Through the GaDOE program and the FCC's Emergency Connectivity Fund, more than 144,000 hot spots with data plans were deployed to students.[169]

3.1.4 Broadband adoption

The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) tracks internet adoption and device ownership. Per the most recent ACS five-year estimates, 13.8 percent of households in Georgia do not subscribe to an internet service, and 6.8 percent do not have a computer.[170] Given the total number of households in the state,[171] these percentages represent approximately 536,181 households and 264,205 households, respectively.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic underscored the criticality of reliable, high-speed connectivity for students to learn remotely and complete schoolwork at home, the State has worked to ensure that students have the connectivity they need. As part of GaDOE's K-12 Connectivity program, the initial phase of the Georgia Student Connect Program provided hotspots with free internet service to households with a K-12 student living in low-income housing. The Emergency

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[167] "STEM/STEAM Georgia," GaDOE, https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/CTAE/Pages/STEM.aspx.

[168] "Georgia Student Connect," Georgia Department of Education, https://gastudentconnect.org/.

[169] "Georgia K-12 Connectivity," Georgia Department of Education, https://www.gadoe.org/Technology-Services/Pages/K-12-Connectivity.aspx.

[170] "QuickFacts: Georgia," U.S. Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/GA,US/PST045221 (accessed March 28, 2023).

[171] "QuickFacts: Georgia," U.S. Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/GA,US/PST045221 (accessed March 28, 2023).

Connectivity Fund (ECF) also provided approximately 480,000 connected devices, including hotspots, to 121,000 students in Georgia.[172]

Several school districts in the state provide desktop computers, laptops, and/or tablets as well as technical support to students, such as the Gilmer County Board of Education's Chromebook 1-to-1 program(see Table 8 and Table 41).

Recognizing that many students in the state's rural areas lack adequate access to broadband, technology, and devices, GaDOE's Office of Rural Education and Innovation (established in 2021) has made connectivity one of its key priorities. The Office's initiatives include increasing broadband access and adoption through awarding technology grants to rural school districts and promoting ACP enrollment, providing cybersecurity training and tools, and ensuring equitable access to 21st century learning and devices.[173]

Aided by these efforts, the State had an overall student-to-device ratio of 67:100 for the 2022 school year.[174]

The State's public libraries also serve as an important resource for residents to access the internet, with some—such as Clayton County Public Libraries and the Piedmont Regional Library System—offering devices for checkout and technology skills training. The Georgia Public Library Service (the State agency for libraries) offers statewide programs to address internet availability and affordability, digital literacy, and online accessibility. Individuals who are blind or whose physical abilities require the use of books and magazines in audio format or in braille can access assistive technology and accessible reading materials through the Georgia Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (GLS).

3.1.5 Broadband affordability

In Georgia, 576,430 households were enrolled in the ACP as of March 2023,[175] out of a total 1,571,000 eligible (based on a 2022 estimate).[176] Therefore, 36.7 percent of households who could potentially receive the subsidy are participating in the program.

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[172] "The American Rescue Plan's Impact on Georgia on Two-Year Anniversary," White House Briefing Room, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/ARP-State-by-State_Georgia.pdf.
[173] "Rural Education and Innovation presentation," GaDOE, https://shealy-my.sharepoint.com/:p:/g/personal/bronwyn_ragan-martin_doe_k12_ga_us/EVNQvk9O94NIjLoS2WyDpJoB9aT8i7wSHHuoaWUlxtO3vw?e=Il8NPA.
[174] "Technology Inventory," GaDOE, https://georgiainsights.gadoe.org/Dashboards/Pages/Technology-Inventory.aspx.
[175] "ACP Enrollment and Claims Tracker," USAC, last updated March 27, 2023, https://www.usac.org/about/affordable-connectivity-program/acp-enrollment-and-claims-tracker/ (accessed March 28, 2023).
[176] "Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Fact Sheet: Georgia," White House Briefing Room, July 2022, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Georgia-BIL-Fact-Sheet.pdf.

In May 2023, GTA launched a statewide initiative with the nonprofit EducationSuperHighway and more than 100 coalition partners—including local governments, community organizations, businesses, and service providers—to raise awareness about the ACP and promote enrollment.[177]

GTA will use its outreach channels to raise awareness about the ACP, as well as collaborating with municipalities and trusted community organizations and institutions to overcome trust, awareness, and other barriers that can prevent eligible households from enrolling in the program.

GTA is partnering with EducationSuperHighway to train community members as ACP enrollment specialists through a free virtual certification course that will equip participants to assist with enrolling in the subsidy and selecting an internet plan. In May 2023, in partnership with EducationSuperHighway, GTA hosted a virtual ACP Enrollment Certification Drive with over 100 partners, recruiting 200 participants,[178] and resulting in 40 newly certified enrollment counselors. EducationSuperHighway also provided outreach tools to help with the enrollment process, including a virtual mobile assistant[179] that provides support in four languages.

Recognizing that school districts are also well-positioned to assist in this process as they have established relationships with parents, GaDOE's Georgia Student Connect program has transitioned to providing support services to school districts to help enroll families in the ACP. Services include a call center that can conduct outreach to households and act as an "ACP hotline" to assist with the enrollment process.

Further showing its commitment to affordable broadband, GTA required all awarded grantees under Georgia's Capital Projects Fund grant program to participate in the ACP. In addition, GTA provided additional points to CPF grant applicants who committed to providing a low--cost offering. GTA is considering using similar practices for its upcoming BEAD grant program.

The table below identifies a sampling of ISPs' discounted service and device programs for low-income subscribers and related broadband affordability assets in the State. The full list of ISPs in the State that participate in the ACP is included in Appendix A: Asset inventory – additional assets.

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[177] "ACP Pre-Enrollment Wizard," https://getacp.org/Georgia.

[178] "Georgia Technology Authority launches statewide initiative to increase Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) adoption," GTA website, https://gta.georgia.gov/news/2023-05-19/georgia-technology-authority-launches-statewide-initiative-increase-affordable.

[179] Available at https://getacp.org/Georgia.

Table 11. Broadband affordability assets

Asset name	Description
Access from AT&T plan	Eligible low-income households can receive up to 100 Mbps symmetrical speeds[180] through the Access from AT&T plan for $30 per month, or at no cost with the ACP subsidy.[181] Qualifying DSL customers who have speeds of 10 Mbps or less available may be able to get this plan at a lower cost ($5 to $10 per month, with a data cap.)[182]
Comcast Internet Essentials program	Comcast, an ISP, offers the Internet Essentials plan, priced at $9.95 per month, which is available to qualifying low-income and other households in Georgia.[183] Comcast Internet Essentials delivers speeds up to 50 Mbps and Comcast Internet Essentials Plus delivers up to 100 Mbps for $29.95 per month.[184] Households that subscribe to Internet Essentials can purchase a new Dell laptop or Chromebook for $149.99 plus tax.[185]
Cox Communications ConnectAssist and Connect2Compete plans	Cox Communications (Cox) offers two low-cost plans for qualifying low-income customers: ConnectAssist for any eligible household, and Connect2Compete for eligible households with at least one K-12 student. ConnectAssist offers up to 100/3 Mbps for $30 per month, effectively $0 with the application of the ACP subsidy. Connect2Compete offers the same speeds for $9.95 per month (effectively at no cost with the ACP subsidy).[186] Both plans also offer access to educational resources through Cox Digital Academy.[187]
GaDOE ACP enrollment support	GaDOE provides ACP enrollment support services to school districts through the K-12 Connectivity Program. Districts can perform their own outreach using resources provided by GaDOE or utilize a call center created through the program; the call center also runs an ACP enrollment support hotline for families.

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[180] "New 'Access from AT&T' Plan + New Federal Benefit = Free Internet," AT&T News Release, February 7, 2022, https://about.att.com/story/2022/new-access-plan-plus-new-federal-benefit.html.

[181] "Access from AT&T – Low-Cost Internet Service," AT&T, https://www.att.com/internet/access/.

[182] "New 'Access from AT&T' Plan + New Federal Benefit = Free Internet," AT&T News Release, February 7, 2022, https://about.att.com/story/2022/new-access-plan-plus-new-federal-benefit.html.

[183] Comcast, application for Internet Essentials plan, https://apply.internetessentials.com/.

[184] Comcast, "Internet Essentials," https://www.xfinity.com/learn/internet-service/internet-essentials.

[185] Comcast, "Low-Cost Computer," https://internetessentials.com/low-cost-computer.

[186] "Affordable Internet Options from Cox," Cox Communications, https://www.cox.com/residential/internet/low-cost-internet-plans.html.

[187] "Which Affordable Internet Program Are You Eligible For?" Cox Communications, https://www.cox.com/residential/articles/things-to-know-about-affordable-internet.html.

Asset name	Description
Spectrum Internet Assist plan	Spectrum Internet Assist offers qualifying low-income customers 30/4 Mbps service for $19.99 per month, or no cost with the ACP subsidy.[188]

3.2   Needs assessment

The State's comprehensive partner outreach program included extensive efforts to identify the needs of all Georgians with an emphasis on those belonging to covered populations. Outreach and data collection efforts were made to assess the baseline from which the State is working and to identify the barriers to digital connectivity faced generally and by each of the covered populations in Georgia.

The State's research and analysis are based on available and relevant data from the American Community Survey (ACS), NTIA's Internet Use Survey (administered as a supplement to the Current Population Survey), and the FCC's National Broadband Map. Analysis was undertaken to benchmark Georgia against national averages, and to benchmark its residents belonging to covered populations against those that do not belong to covered populations.

The data and analysis are intended to facilitate understanding of the extent to which:

1. Broadband internet service is available to and adopted by residents

2. Residents are confidently performing various digital skills

3. Residents are aware of and impacted by online security and privacy concerns

4. Computer devices are abundant and adequate for meaningful internet use

5. Online government resources and services are accessibly built and maintained

In brief, a key reason cited by Georgia households that do not subscribe to broadband is the issue of affordability of service. Notably, no respondents claimed that online security or privacy concerns prevented them from home internet use. While data suggests Georgians perform relatively well in many associated metrics of digital connectivity, data specific to members of covered populations indicate that barriers may still exist even when survey respondents do not cite them in their responses.

The data Indicate that Georgia's digital opportunity needs encompass access to affordable broadband services, increased enrollment in broadband service subsidy programs, device access,

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[188] "Low Income Internet Service | Spectrum Internet Assist Program," Spectrum, https://www.spectrum.com/internet/spectrum-internet-assist.

and digital skills training. In the following table, the "Federal and state data sources" section summarizes key barriers for each covered population identified through this assessment.

As shown in the table, sufficient data were not available for a covered population in some cases, and in other cases the analysis of available data did not conclude statistically significant differences. As a supplement to the data analysis, the "State outreach sources" section of the table includes barriers and obstacles for each population that were stated by partners during GTA's outreach, as described in Section 4.1. As noted in the table, outreach is ongoing as of the writing of this Plan to collect additional data on populations for which data were not available for analysis.

Table 12. Key barriers and obstacles for covered populations

Definitions				Federal and state data sources				
Covered population	Definition	Key barriers and obstacles	Key partners	Broadband availability	Broadband adoption	Digital skills	Online security	Device adoption
Low-income households - "covered households"	A household, the income of which for the most recently completed year is not more than 150 percent of an amount equal to the poverty level, as determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census	Disproportionately less covered by broadband; display the most urgent needs for more affordable broadband; indicate the need for digital skills and telemedicine training; report needs for increased awareness of and confidence in protecting themselves from online security and privacy threats; display urgent needs for increased device access; lack of available, accessible training. Needs stated from community organization survey responses: "Digital literacy taught at various times of day to accommodate working individuals and those in school." "Local training and advanced options, transportation to trainings, direct outreach and guidance, device ownership, home internet access." "A large percentage of our population is homeless and/or financially insecure. This is a huge barrier to clothing, food, as well as internet access." "Cost; credit history with the major carriers; lack of knowledge of ACP."	DCA, DHS, Community Action Agencies	It is likely that very-low-income households are disproportionately less covered by broadband	Low-income individuals display the most urgent needs for more affordable broadband[189]	Low-income individuals indicate need for digital skills and telemedicine training[190]	Low-income individuals report needs for increased awareness of and confidence in protecting themselves from online security and privacy threats[191]	Low-income individuals display the most urgent needs for increased device access[192]
Aging individuals	Any individual who is 60 years of age or older	Less likely to be served by broadband; display needs for greater internet adoption; indicate	AARP, DHS Division on Aging,	Aging individuals are less likely	Aging individuals display needs	Aging individuals indicate the	Aging individuals report needs	Aging individuals display a need

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[189] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).
[190] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, November 2021 (CPSPUM 2021) (accessed August 29, 2023).
[191] CPSPUM 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).
[192] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

Definitions		State outreach sources		Federal and state data sources				
Covered population	Definition	Key barriers and obstacles	Key partners	Broadband availability	Broadband adoption	Digital skills	Online security	Device adoption
		the need for digital skills and telemedicine training; report needs for increased confidence in protecting themselves from online security and privacy threats; display a need for greater device adoption. Needs stated from community organization survey responses: "The elderly population that uses our [support] services are struggling with having adequate digital skills. There is no one outside of their family who can help them. The public library is being heavily used for these services - almost to the point of not having enough help to serve." Respondents note individuals may be familiar with a smartphone but not a computer.	TechSmart for Seniors, Older Adults Technology Services (OATS), Atlanta Housing Authority, Macon Housing Authority	to be served by broadband[193]	for greater internet adoption[194]	most urgent need for digital skills and telemedicine training[195]	for increased confidence in protecting themselves from online security and privacy threats[196]	for greater device adoption[197]
Incarcerated individuals	Any individual currently or formerly incarcerated in a non-federal correctional facility	Needs stated from community organization survey responses: "Many of our prisons are in rural areas where internet connectivity is limited." "Need reliable high-speed internet at rural prison locations. We do some computer classes with limited internet access." "Due to security restrictions with incarcerated individuals, there must	GDC, DCS, DJJ	Analysis of data for Georgia did not conclude a specific barrier or need	No data are currently available; GTA is partnering with key agencies and organizations to develop relevant data.	No data are currently available; GTA is partnering with key agencies and organizations to develop relevant data.	No data are currently available; GTA is partnering with key agencies and organizations to develop relevant data.	No data are currently available; GTA is partnering with key agencies and organizations to develop relevant data.

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[193] U.S. Census Bureau, Digital Equity Act of 2021, State Data, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/community-resilience-estimates/partnerships/ntia/digital-equity.html (accessed August 29, 2023).

[194] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

[195] CPSPUM 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

[196] CPSPUM 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

[197] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

Definitions		State outreach sources		Federal and state data sources				
Covered population	Definition	Key barriers and obstacles	Key partners	Broadband availability	Broadband adoption	Digital skills	Online security	Device adoption
		be restricted networks, whitelisting, secured devices, etc."						
Veterans	A person who served in the active military, naval, air, or space service, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable	Veterans report needs for increased confidence in protecting themselves from online security and privacy threats	GDVS, Returning Veterans Task Force	Barriers faced by this group are the same as those faced by other Georgians with similar needs	Veterans lag non-veterans in internet adoption[198]	Older veterans need digital skills and telemedicine programming [199]	Veterans report needs for increased confidence in protecting themselves from online security and privacy threats[200]	Barriers faced by this group are the same as those faced by other Georgians with similar needs
Individuals with disabilities	Any individual living with a self-identified physical or mental disability	Display a need for greater internet adoption; indicate the need for digital skills and telemedicine training; report needs for increased confidence in protecting themselves from online security and privacy threats; display a need for greater device adoption; lack of access to content. Needs stated from community organization survey responses: "Availability of assistive technologies in libraries varies depending on location, funding, need."	GVRA, DBHDD, GLS	Barriers faced by this group are the same as those faced by other Georgians with similar needs	Individuals with disabilities display a need for greater internet adoption[201]	Individuals living with disabilities indicate need for digital skills and telemedicine training[202]	Individuals with disabilities report needs for increased confidence in protecting themselves from online security and privacy threats[203]	Individuals living with disabilities display a need for greater device adoption[204]
Individuals with	Any individual that either	Individuals with significant language barriers are disproportionately	GPLS, GaDOE	Individuals with	No data are currently	No data are currently	No data are currently	No data are currently

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[198] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 16, 2023).
[199] CPSPUM 2021 (accessed August 17, 2023).
[200] CPSPUM 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).
[201] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).
[202] CPSPUM 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).
[203] CPSPUM 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).
[204] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

Definitions		State outreach sources		Federal and state data sources				
Covered population	Definition	Key barriers and obstacles	Key partners	Broadband availability	Broadband adoption	Digital skills	Online security	Device adoption
language barriers	reports an English language proficiency less than "very well" or with a literacy level beneath that of a grade 6 student[205]	unserved by broadband		significant language barriers are disproportionately unserved by broadband[206]	available; GTA is partnering with key agencies and organizations to develop relevant data.	available; GTA is partnering with key agencies and organizations to develop relevant data.	available; GTA is partnering with key agencies and organizations to develop relevant data.	available; GTA is partnering with key agencies and organizations to develop relevant data.
Individuals who are English learners (alone)	Any individual that reports an English language proficiency less than "very well"	English language learners display a need for greater internet adoption; they report needs for confidence in protecting themselves from online security and privacy threats; and they display a need for greater device adoption.	Latino Community Fund	Barriers faced by this group are the same as those faced by other Georgians with similar needs	English language learners display a need for greater internet adoption[207]	Barriers faced by this group are the same as those faced by other Georgians with similar needs	English language learners report needs for confidence in protecting themselves from online security and privacy threats[208]	English language learners display a need for greater device adoption[209]
Individuals who have low levels of literacy (alone)	Any individual with a literacy level beneath that of a grade 6 student	It is likely that individuals with low levels of literacy are disproportionately unserved by broadband.	GPLS, Literacy Action, Coalition on Adult Basic Education, GDC, TCSG	It is likely that individuals with low levels of literacy are disproportion	No data are currently available; GTA is partnering with key agencies and	No data are currently available; GTA is partnering with key agencies and	No data are currently available; GTA is partnering with key agencies and	No data are currently available; GTA is partnering with key agencies and

[205] Grade 6 has been adopted as a reasonable threshold for practical purposes. Neither NTIA nor the U.S. Census Bureau define low literacy. Census has developed probabilistic estimates using National Center for Education Statistics data assigning "low literacy" to Level 1 (i.e., the lowest out of five levels). See "2019 State Total Covered Populations Under the Digital Equity Act of 2021: Quick Guide," U.S. Census Bureau, NTIA. 2022, https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/demo/technical-documentation/community-resilience/state_total_covered_populations_quick_guide.pdf.

[206] U.S. Census Bureau, Digital Equity Act of 2021, State Data, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/community-resilience-estimates/partnerships/ntia/digital-equity.html (accessed August 29, 2023).

[207] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

[208] CPSPUM 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

[209] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

Definitions		State outreach sources		Federal and state data sources				
Covered population	Definition	Key barriers and obstacles	Key partners	Broadband availability	Broadband adoption	Digital skills	Online security	Device adoption
				ately unserved by broadband[210]	organizations to develop relevant data.	organizations to develop relevant data.	organizations to develop relevant data.	organizations to develop relevant data.
Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority	Racial and ethnic minority group means American Indians (including Alaska Natives, Eskimos, and Aleuts); Asian Americans; Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders; Blacks; and Hispanics.	Racial and ethnic minorities indicated need for telemedicine training; report needs for increased awareness and confidence in protecting themselves from online security and privacy threats; display a material gap in desktop or laptop ownership	Georgia Council of American Indian Concerns	Barriers faced by this group are the same as those faced by other Georgians with similar needs	Barriers faced by this group are the same as those faced by other Georgians with similar needs	Racial and ethnic minorities indicated need for telemedicine training[211]	Racial and ethnic minorities report needs for increased awareness and confidence in protecting themselves from online security and privacy threats[212]	Racial and ethnic minorities display a material gap in desktop or laptop ownership[213]

[210] U.S. Census Bureau, Digital Equity Act of 2021, State Data, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/community-resilience-estimates/partnerships/ntia/digital-equity.html (accessed August 29, 2023).

[211] CPSPUM 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

[212] CPSPUM 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

[213] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area	Any individual living in a non-urban area; urban is defined according to the U.S. Census (based on the 2010 Decennial Survey) as urbanized areas, which contain 50,000 or more people, and urban clusters, which have at least 2,500 people but fewer than 50,000 residents	Rural individuals are in the most urgent need of increased broadband availability; indicate the need for digital skills and telemedicine training; report needs for increased awareness and confidence in protecting themselves from online security and privacy threats. Needs stated from community organization survey responses: Stakeholders from the following counties specifically mentioned issues due to rural/remote location: Polk, Glynn, Laurens, Grady, Elbert, Terrell, Randolph, Steward, Clay, Schley, Marion, Calhoun, Hancock, Chattooga, Muscogee, and Walker. "Rural areas don't have access. There are parts of Georgia where you cannot get a cellular signal." "They are limited in choices and access to reliable, affordable high speed internet services." "Many of our prisons are in rural areas where internet connectivity is limited." "If they don't have it in their homes, there may be issues with transportation to get to a location that does provide the service, how to use the service may also be an issue." "Students outside of Muscogee County often have very limited access to effective broadband connections. Many of our students, even in Muscogee County, are not able to afford reliable, high-speed broadband connectivity other than on their telephones. This makes online learning courses and access to college online resource challenging	USG Extension Service, Empower Southwest Georgia, GaDOE Office on Rural Education and Innovation	Rural individuals are in the most urgent need of increased broadband availability[214]	While no data are currently available in these areas, Georgia is endeavoring to develop relevant data in partnership with other state agencies	Rural individuals indicate need for digital skills and telemedicine training[215]	Rural individuals report needs for increased awareness and confidence in protecting themselves from online security and privacy threats[216]	While no data are currently available in these areas, Georgia is endeavoring to develop relevant data in partnership with other state agencies

Definitions		State outreach sources		Federal and state data sources				
Covered population	Definition	Key barriers and obstacles	Key partners	Broadband availability	Broadband adoption	Digital skills	Online security	Device adoption
		for them." "There are dead spots in Walker County for Internet. High speed internet is not affordable, and anything less doesn't cover all of the data needs of the household." "Workers perform all their field activities/work in the field, orchards, outdoors and have difficulty to access internet or limited provider or expensive internet options. no resources available in their language." "We are located in rural, southeast Georgia. There is one local internet provider, and other providers, like Hughes net, have limited network availability due to the rural nature of the area and are cost prohibitive." "One provider, lack of service in rural areas if any at all. Cost is around $100 per month and not worth the money." "Poverty, lack of digital literacy, and imbedded inequity unite to prevent members of the community our organization serves from accessing or using broadband internet services. This part of GA [southwest] ranks the lowest in the state for broadband access. … This internet desert leaves students in an information desert when they get home from school. Public						

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[214] U.S. Census Bureau, Digital Equity Act of 2021, State Data, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/community-resilience-estimates/partnerships/ntia/digital-equity.html (accessed August 29, 2023).

[215] CPSPUM 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

[216] CPSPUM 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

Definitions		State outreach sources		Federal and state data sources				
Covered population	Definition	Key barriers and obstacles	Key partners	Broadband availability	Broadband adoption	Digital skills	Online security	Device adoption
		schools in our region have access to broadband… but when students go home to do their homework (or research topics that became alive during the school day) the students are severely constrained by lack of access to broadband. … Their [unserved residents in southwest Georgia] experience includes leaving their homes and driving around the neighborhood until they can get a signal strong enough to sustain a conversation in a Zoom meeting."						

3.2.1   Covered population needs assessment

Due to the unique constraints of each data source used in the state's needs assessment for covered populations, various analyses focus on different subsets of covered populations.

In Georgia, 85.2 percent[217] of the state's population belongs to a covered population. This implies that the interests of covered populations closely align to those of the whole state: Georgia as a whole and its covered populations are not likely to have misaligned priorities because the latter make up the vast majority of the former. Therefore, by planning to increase digital connectivity for covered populations, the State is taking meaningful steps to address the entirety of its digital connectivity needs. The portion of Georgia belonging to at least one covered population is contextualized in Figure 2 and Figure 3 below.

Figure 2. Portion of State populations belonging to a covered population (map)[218]
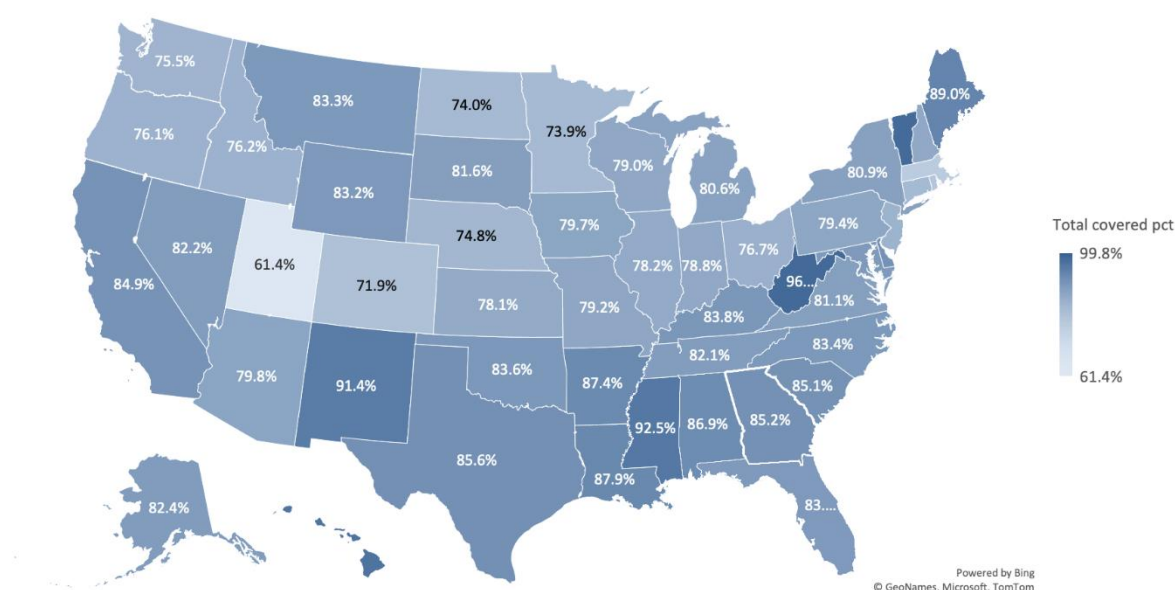
Figure 3. Portions of State populations belonging to a covered population (chart)[219]
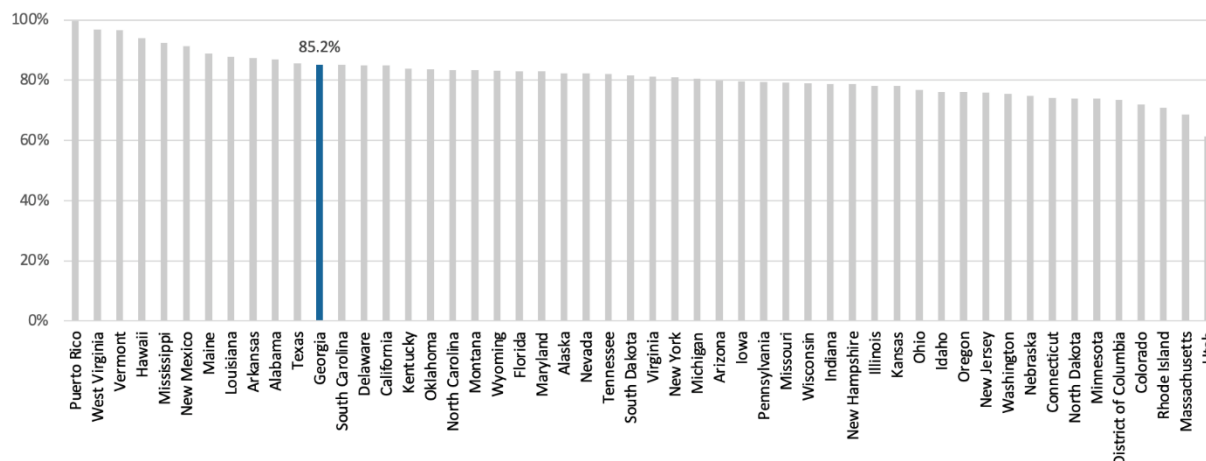
Within Georgia, most individuals belonging to covered populations live in rural areas, are racial or ethnic minorities, have a relatively low income, are older than 59 years old, and/or have low levels of literacy. These covered populations are much larger in the state than those defined by incarceration status, English language proficiency, and veteran status. Perhaps most notable is the size of Georgia's racial or ethnic minority population: An estimated 48.2 percent is either a racial or ethnic minority (as opposed to only 40.6 percent nationally). Georgia and national demographics are illustrated in Table 13 below.

Table 13. Portion of Georgia and U.S. in various covered populations[220, 221]

Covered group	Georgia		Nation		Gap	
Any covered group	85.2%		81.5%		3.7%	
Low income	22.3%		20.1%		2.2%	
Aging	20.1%		22.9%		-2.8%	
Incarcerated	0.9%		0.6%		0.3%	
Veteran	5.8%		5.3%		0.5%	
Disabled	12.9%		13.3%		-0.4%	
Language barrier	20.2%		21.4%		-1.2%	
English language learner	5.4%		8.4%		-3.0%	
Low literacy	23.6%		21.9%		1.7%	
Minority	48.2%		40.6%		7.6%	
Rural	34.6%		28.5%		6.1%	

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[219] U.S. Census Bureau, Digital Equity Act of 2021, State Data, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/community-resilience-estimates/partnerships/ntia/digital-equity.html (accessed August 29, 2023).
[220] U.S. Census Bureau, Digital Equity Act of 2021, State Data, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/community-resilience-estimates/partnerships/ntia/digital-equity.html (accessed August 29, 2023).
[221] These data are sourced from the Census Bureau's Digital Equity Act of 2021 collection, which includes ACS and NTIA Internet Use Survey data as well as imputations from external data sources such as the National Center for

The demographic groups illustrated above are not mutually exclusive and many individuals belonging to a covered population belong to multiple covered populations; for example, many individuals living in rural areas are also low-income. Further, many of these traits are related, and possibly causally so—for example, individuals living with disabilities have higher tendencies to be on fixed incomes because of their disabilities. In this case, their presence in one covered population (individuals living with disabilities) directly affects their likelihood to appear in another covered population (individuals living in lower-income households). Additionally, individuals living with disabilities are in many cases more likely to be precluded from meaningful use of the internet by their relatively low income as opposed to their disability. Therefore, caution is urged in attributing causes of broadband outcomes to the nature of the affected covered populations.

This implies an unintuitive idea that digital connectivity interventions may not be most impactful by targeting the covered population that appears in most urgent need. For example, individuals living with disabilities might present in some cases as the covered population with the most urgent needs, but tailoring support to low-income households and lowering the costs of broadband acquisition may be the most effective path toward impacting individuals living with disabilities.

Individuals belonging to covered populations are present throughout the entirety of Georgia, and, definitionally, they are uniformly present outside of urban and suburban environments. The geographic distribution of covered populations is shown in Figure 4 below.

Education Statistics to create the most comprehensive set of covered populations data. However, the data set is slightly outdated, sourcing ACS data from 2019 (most recent) to as far back as 2015. Additionally, the full data set is difficult to update given the limited documentation on the imputations performed. Therefore, for many of the remaining sections wherein analysis is performed on more specific broadband barriers rather than wholistic demographic statistics, more easily repeatable analysis is performed on more up-to-date data from ACS and the NTIA Internet Use Survey (via the Current Population Survey). As a tradeoff with the increased data quality and useability, some insight into covered populations is lost, especially regarding formerly incarcerated individuals and individuals with low levels of literacy.

Figure 4. Map of covered populations in Georgia[222]

Portion of census tracts in a covered population

	35% - 50%		50%- 75%		75% - 85%		85% - 100%

Basemap: ESRI World Topographic
Coordinate System: NAD1983 State Plane Georgia West

Created By: CTC Technology and Energy, 20230906
Data Sources: ESRI Atlas, FCC BDC Aug 29 2023 Note: null values were not assigned a color
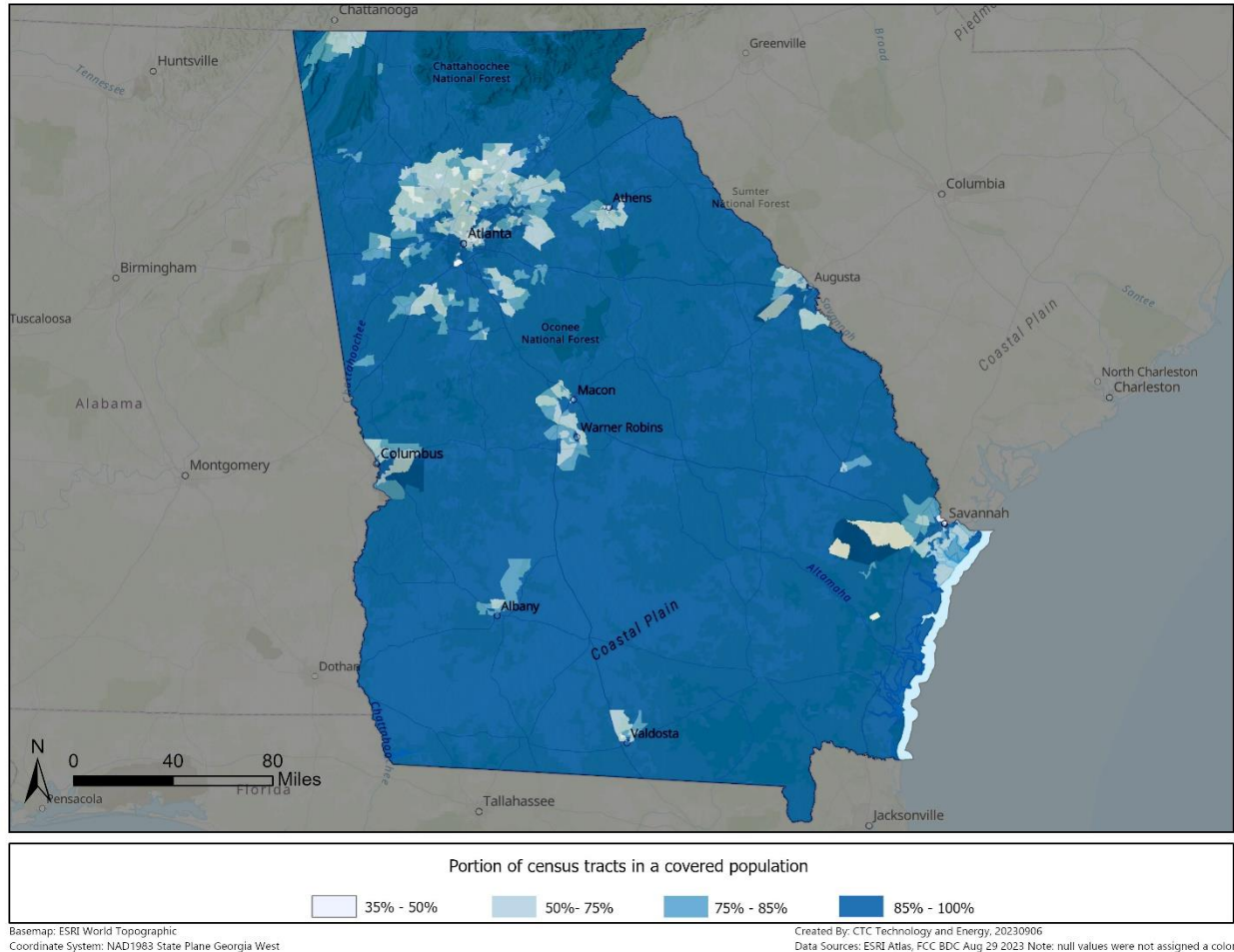
3.2.2   Broadband adoption

Access to broadband service is the primary prerequisite for broadband adoption and using the internet meaningfully to participate in the increasingly digital economy and world. For that reason, the State has completed a robust geographic analysis of broadband service offerings, a regression analysis of covered population presence and broadband availability, a comparative analysis of internet adoption rates across covered populations, and an analysis of ACP uptake and eligibility to understand resident's remaining needs in terms of access to broadband internet service and broadband adoption. These analyses show:

1. Georgia outperforms the nation in availability of highest speed broadband (which is likely concentrated in urban areas).

2. Individuals living in rural areas face the most urgent needs for broadband availability.

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[222] U.S. Census Bureau, Digital Equity Act of 2021, State Data, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/community-resilience-estimates/partnerships/ntia/digital-equity.html (accessed August 29, 2023).

3. Georgia outpaces the nation in all indicators of internet adoption and subscription rates.

4. Covered populations in Georgia are uniformly adopting the internet less frequently than individuals that do not belong to a covered population. This gap is largest when compared across incomes.

5. Georgia outperforms the national average for the percentage of eligible households enrolled in the ACP subsidy program, but Georgia still has a large opportunity for enrollment growth. (See Section 3.2.3 for more details.)

Of all Georgia households that do not use internet at home, an estimated 3 percent[223] claim that a main reason for their lack of internet use is a lack of available internet service. While this is not the most frequently cited cause, the availability of service is an absolute condition for all other digital connectivity needs, and therefore deserves substantial attention.

Georgia largely aligns with the rest of the nation in indicators of broadband availability. When considering all internet delivery technologies (including those that are known to be less reliable such as satellite-based services), the FCC reports that Georgia and the nation are entirely served through speeds of 25/3 Mbps (which is the federal threshold for broadband service of any kind). However, Georgia has 2 percentage points fewer units served by speeds of at least 100/20 Mbps than the nation. At higher speeds, such as 1,000/100 Mbps, the gap reverses, with Georgia outpacing the national average by over 10 percentage points.

Georgia appears even more well-positioned once service is limited to wireline technologies. 90.9 percent of units in Georgia are within a coverage footprint for wireline internet delivering 25/3 Mbps, as opposed to 89.8 percent nationally. Across every speed reported by the FCC, Georgia outpaces the nation in wireline coverage. The same does not hold for licensed fixed wireless, which can be helpful for delivering service to areas that present difficulty for wireline construction, however Georgia is not far behind the nation in these regards.

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[223] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, November 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

Table 14. Portion of units served with internet at various speeds in Georgia and the U.S.[224]

	Coverage (in Mbps)	Georgia	Nation	Gap
All technologies	0.2 / 0.2	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%
	10 / 1	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%
	25 / 3	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%
	100 / 20	90.2%	92.1%	-2.0%
	250 / 25	88.1%	87.2%	0.9%
	1000 / 100	43.2%	33.2%	10.1%
Wireline	Coverage (in Mbps)	Georgia	Nation	Gap
	0.2 / 0.2	95.3%	93.4%	1.9%
	10 / 1	93.7%	91.7%	2.1%
	25 / 3	90.9%	89.8%	1.1%
	100 / 20	89.5%	88.4%	1.1%
	250 / 25	88.1%	86.6%	1.4%
	1000 / 100	43.2%	32.3%	10.9%
Licensed fixed wireless	Coverage (in Mbps)	Georgia	Nation	Gap
	0.2 / 0.2	80.0%	79.5%	0.5%
	10 / 1	53.1%	54.9%	-1.8%
	25 / 3	50.7%	51.7%	-1.0%
	100 / 20	18.1%	19.2%	-1.2%
	250 / 25	1.5%	2.6%	-1.1%
	1000 / 100	0.0%	0.2%	-0.2%

Certain areas of Georgia see low levels of coverage because private ISPs choose to invest elsewhere, where return on investment will presumably be greater. The availability of wireline or robust licensed fixed wireless broadband service in Georgia tends to correlate with the density of population. In more densely populated areas, there are more potential customers relative to construction costs. As a result, consistent with patterns throughout the United States, service in Georgia is frequently spotty in rural areas, as shown below for speeds of 25/3 Mbps (Figure 5), and 100/20 Mbps (Figure 6).

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[224] FCC, National Broadband Map, last updated August 16, 2023 (accessed August 29, 2023).

Figure 5. Map of units served by 25/3 Mbps[225]
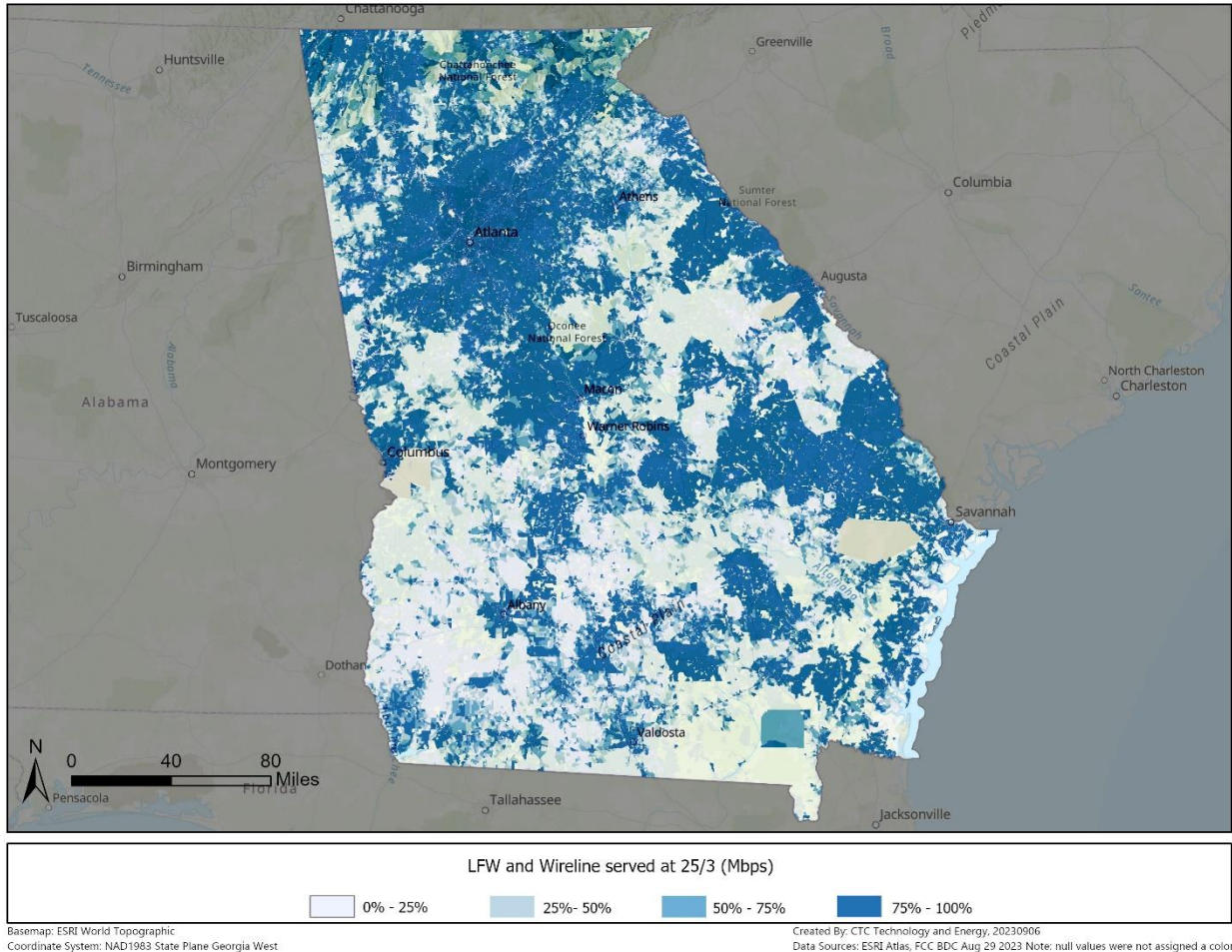
[225] FCC, National Broadband Map, last updated August 9, 2023 (accessed August 29, 2023).

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Figure 6. Map of units served by 100/20 Mbps[226]
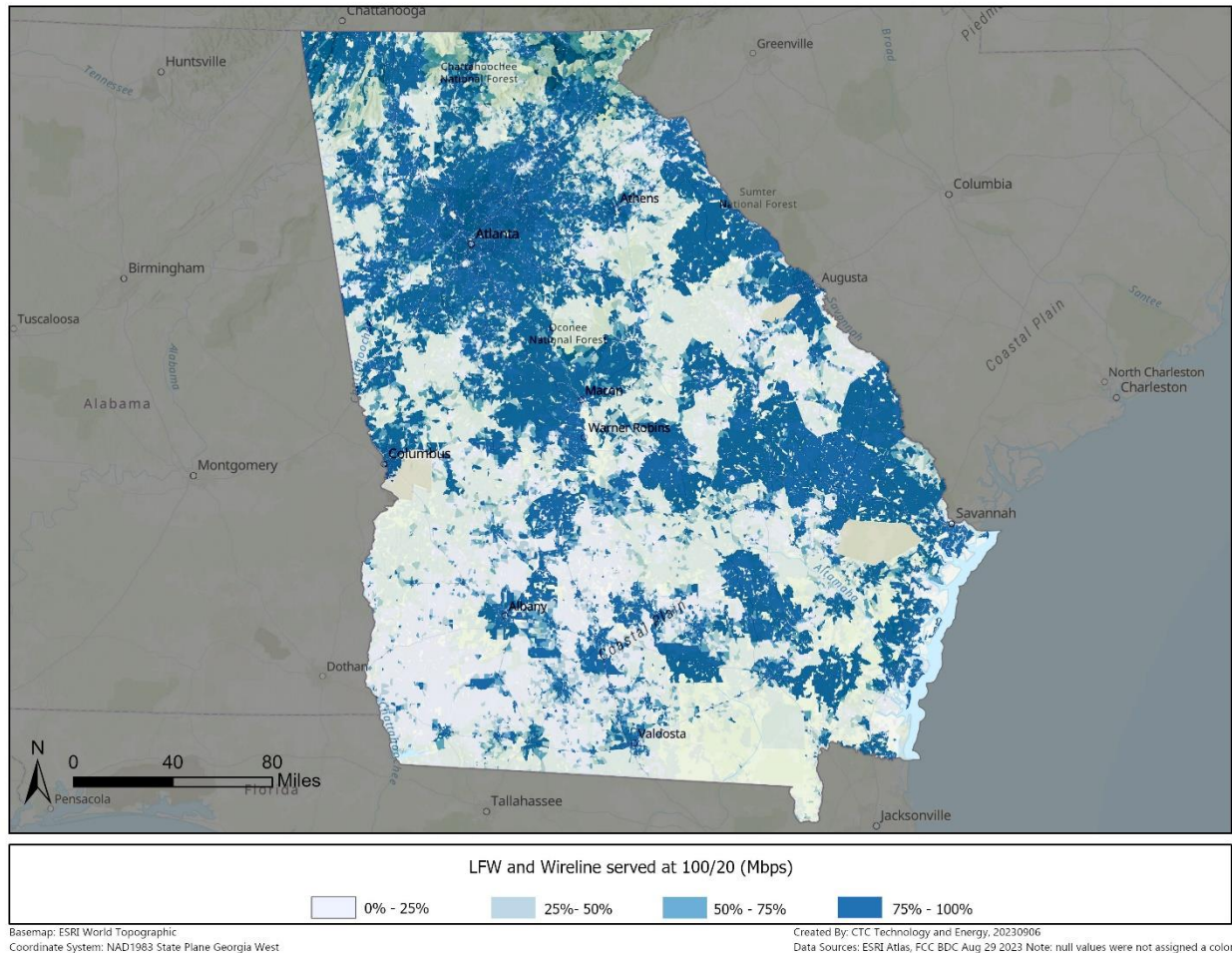
A regression analysis compared the prevalence of covered populations in each census tract in Georgia with the portion of units unserved by at least one broadband internet option with speeds of 25/3 Mbps or greater. The resulting correlation was relatively weak, with an R^2 value of 0.44. However, the analysis does further underline the relationship between rurality and broadband availability, as it was the most statistically significant correlation of all covered populations by a wide margin.

In addition to individuals living in rural areas, aging individuals and those facing language barriers (including low levels of literacy) also were statistically significantly, positively correlated, meaning that the presence of these groups indicated a decrease in available broadband. It is possible that individuals with low levels of literacy align with areas of extremely low income, which are not viable for private investment in broadband.

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[226] FCC, National Broadband Map, last updated August 9, 2023 (accessed August 29, 2023).

Only two other covered populations achieved statistical significance in relation to availability: The portions of a census tract made up of racial or ethnic minorities, and English language proficiency. In both cases, the correlation was negative, meaning there was increased broadband availability. These results are possibly due to racial or ethnic minorities and English language learners being concentrated in urban areas where broadband is more likely to be available.

The full results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 15.

Table 15. Regression analysis of portion of census tract belonging to covered populations and portion of units unserved[227]

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.660
R Square	0.436
Adjusted R Square	0.432
Standard Error	0.163
Observations	1244

Variables	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Statistically significant
Intercept	-0.067	0.022	-3.034	0.002	✓
Income	-0.019	0.044	-0.445	0.656	
Aging	0.228	0.077	2.967	0.003	✓
Incarceration status	-0.052	0.081	-0.639	0.52	
Veteran status	-0.243	0.191	-1.269	0.205	
Disability status	-0.199	0.120	-1.662	0.097	
Language barrier (including low literacy)	0.827	0.104	7.924	5.09E-15	✓
English proficiency	-0.699	0.107	-6.541	8.91E-11	✓
Race and ethnicity	-0.102	0.026	-3.954	8.12E-05	✓
Rurality	0.220	0.013	16.490	2.30E-55	✓

Neither broadband availability nor many of these demographic characteristics are uniform throughout census tracts or binary in nature. For example, extremely low-income groups tend to cluster in areas much smaller than census tracts, and they face distinct availability obstacles to other individuals that still belong to the "low-income" covered population. It is overwhelmingly likely that low-income households are less well served than higher-income households, although those trends have not appeared statistically when evaluating this exact partitioning of the State. It is possible that a more granular study would reveal more informative relationships between various covered populations and service availability.

[227] Portion of census tract populations belonging to various covered populations from U.S. Census Bureau, Digital Equity Act of 2021, State Data, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/community-resilience-estimates/partnerships/ntia/digital-equity.html (accessed August 29, 2023). Portion of units served in each census tract from FCC's National Broadband Map (accessed August 29, 2023). A number of outlier tracts were removed.

Ultimately, Georgians would benefit greatly from investment in increased service availability. For rural residents specifically, additional service availability could have significant impacts on digital connectivity.

3.2.2.1 Overview of broadband adoption needs

Of all Georgia households that do not use internet at home, an estimated 15 percent[228] claim that a main reason for their lack of internet use at home is an inability to afford service. For the State of Georgia this is the second most reported barrier, suggesting challenges relating to the cost of service and the closely linked concept of reliability seem to be substantial obstacles to digital connectivity for many Georgians.

According to the American Community Survey, 92.3 percent of Georgia residents have a home internet subscription of any kind. This is close to the national rate of 90.3 percent. Georgia residents also have similar adoption of reliable broadband when comparing against the nation. 77.2 percent of Georgia residents have a wireline home internet subscription, whereas the national rate is 75.5 percent. Wireline internet subscriptions tend to be more reliable than others, and therefore can represent a more meaningful measure of useful internet adoption.

Even though Georgia performs similarly to the nation in internet adoption, there is still opportunity for improvement as the national figures mostly help contextualize the State's positionality in a broader context rather than serve as the ceiling for achievement. Accordingly, 12.7 percent of Georgia residents rely on a cellular data plan alone for the home internet service, which is insufficient to realize the many benefits of broadband. Mobile-only individuals typically cite affordability, their smartphone being good enough, and/or having access to broadband somewhere else as the reasons for not having home internet connectivity.

Table 16. Internet adoption rates in Georgia and the U.S.[229]

Internet in the house	Georgia	Nation	Gap
Internet subscription of any kind	92.3%	90.3%	2.0%
Internet subscription via wireline technology (i.e. fiber, cable, DSL)	77.2%	75.5%	1.7%
Only subscription via cellular data plan	12.7%	10.9%	1.8%

90.2 percent of individuals belonging to a covered population report having a home internet subscription as opposed to 97.9 percent of those outside of covered populations. The gap widens for wireline internet connections, for which 73.8 percent of individuals belonging to covered populations claim adoption compared to 86.1 percent of non-covered populations.

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[228] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, November 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

[229] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

Table 17. Internet adoption rates in covered and non-covered populations[230]

Internet in the house	Covered groups	Non covered groups	Gap
Internet subscription of any kind	90.2%	97.9%	-7.7%
Internet subscription via wireline technology (i.e. fiber, cable, DSL)	73.8%	86.1%	-12.3%
Only subscription via cellular data plan	13.6%	10.3%	3.3%

Individuals living in low-income households constitute the covered population with the largest adoption gaps. Low-income individuals are 15.6 percentage points less likely than higher-income individuals to have a home internet subscription, 21.9 percentage points less likely to have a wireline internet subscription, and 4.8 percentage points more likely to only subscribe to a cellular data plan. Aging individuals, people with disabilities, and English language learners constitute three more groups with meaningful adoption gaps; they were 10.7, 12.3, and 9.4 percentage points, respectively, less likely to have a wireline internet subscription than their non-covered population counterparts. Full breakdowns of each covered population's adoption rates are included in Table 18.[231]

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[230] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).
[231] This Plan follows the U.S. Census Bureau's standards on reporting data related to the terms "minority" and "white." See: "About the topic of race," U.S. Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html.

Table 18. Internet adoption rates in various covered populations[232]

	Internet in the house	Low income	Higher income	Gap	
Income	Internet subscription of any kind	80.6%	96.1%	-15.6%	
	Internet subscription via wireline technology (i.e. fiber, cable, DSL)	60.7%	82.5%	-21.9%	
	Only subscription via cellular data plan	16.3%	11.5%	4.8%	
	Internet in the house	**Minority**	**Non-minority**	**Gap**	
Race	Internet subscription of any kind	91.7%	92.9%	-1.2%	
	Internet subscription via wireline technology (i.e. fiber, cable, DSL)	76.1%	78.2%	-2.1%	
	Only subscription via cellular data plan	12.9%	12.5%	0.3%	
	Internet in the house	**Aging**	**Younger**	**Gap**	
Age	Internet subscription of any kind	86.7%	93.8%	-7.1%	
	Internet subscription via wireline technology (i.e. fiber, cable, DSL)	68.7%	79.4%	-10.7%	
	Only subscription via cellular data plan	14.8%	12.1%	2.6%	
	Internet in the house	**With disabilities**	**Without disabilities**	**Gap**	
Disability	Internet subscription of any kind	84.7%	93.5%	-8.8%	
	Internet subscription via wireline technology (i.e. fiber, cable, DSL)	66.5%	78.8%	-12.3%	
	Only subscription via cellular data plan	15.1%	12.3%	2.8%	
	Internet in the house	**English learner**	**Fluent**	**Gap**	
English proficiency	Internet subscription of any kind	87.4%	92.6%	-5.1%	
	Internet subscription via wireline technology (i.e. fiber, cable, DSL)	68.3%	77.7%	-9.4%	
	Only subscription via cellular data plan	16.3%	12.5%	3.9%	
	Internet in the house	**Veteran**	**Non-veteran**	**Gap**	
Veteran status	Internet subscription of any kind	92.1%	92.3%	-0.2%	
	Internet subscription via wireline technology (i.e. fiber, cable, DSL)	76.1%	77.3%	-1.2%	
	Only subscription via cellular data plan	13.0%	12.7%	0.4%	

In addition to the considerable gap between low- and higher-income individuals in internet adoption, the reported frequency of inability and unwillingness to pay for home internet use suggests that the State has substantial needs for interventions to bring down the cost of home internet subscriptions and use.

3.2.2.2 Digital literacy needs

Meaningful use of the internet necessitates confidence and practice with performing a variety of digital skills. Although some individuals may have internet service and a working computer, they can frequently be functionally limited by their inability to navigate the internet effectively. In Georgia, 52 percent of residents without home internet use cite a lack of need or interest in the internet as a reason why they do not use internet in the home. This suggests digital skills programming may be the most impactful intervention for increasing internet usage in the State.

Both findings suggest the possibility that some Georgians do not understand the value of having fluency in various digital skills. Therefore, the State of Georgia has used data from the Current Population Survey and the NTIA Internet Use Survey to evaluate the extent to which various covered populations engage in key online activities. These key findings are as follows:

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[232] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023). Note: Data for incarcerated individuals were not available.

1. Georgia performs similarly to the nation in frequency of online digital skill use and members of covered populations underperform compared to non-covered populations in the State.

2. Individuals living in low-income households, at or above 60 years of age, living with disabilities, or living in rural areas express the most urgent need for digital skills programming.

3. Georgia underperforms compared to the nation across almost all measured telemedicine-related online activities. Similarly, members of covered populations universally underperform across measured telemedicine-related activities compared to non-covered populations.

4. Individuals living in low-income households, racial or ethnic minorities, and individuals living in rural areas express the most urgent need for telemedicinal digital skills programming.

Georgia residents regularly perform online activities at similar rates to the nation. The gap is largest for activities such as watching videos online, in which only 64.1 percent of Georgia residents regularly engage, compared to the national average of 70.1 percent. However, despite almost meeting the national figures, Georgia residents might still benefit from further emphasis upon digital literacy in the state.

Table 19. Digital literacy in Georgia and the U.S.[233]

Online activity	Georgia	Nation	Gap
Uses text messaging or instant messaging	93.6%	93.3%	0.3%
Uses email	92.2%	91.8%	0.4%
Uses online social networks	75.0%	74.6%	0.4%
Shops, makes travel reservations, or uses other consumer services online	71.2%	74.1%	-2.9%
Uses online financial services like banking, investing, paying bills	73.0%	74.3%	-1.3%
Watches videos online	64.1%	70.1%	-6.0%
Participates in online video or voice calls or conferencing	63.5%	65.6%	-2.1%
Streams or downloads music, radio, podcasts, etc.	55.9%	60.0%	-4.1%
Requests services provided by other people via the internet	40.5%	43.0%	-2.5%
Accessing government services	36.0%	38.4%	-2.4%
Takes class or participates in job training online	25.7%	25.7%	0.0%
Interacts with household equipment using the internet	22.2%	22.3%	-0.2%
Telecommutes using the internet	25.6%	27.7%	-2.0%
Searches for a job online	19.7%	21.3%	-1.6%
Posts or uploads blog posts, videos, or other original content	20.4%	17.0%	3.4%
Uses the internet to sell goods	8.9%	10.5%	-1.6%
Offers services for sale via the internet	9.7%	8.8%	1.0%

Individuals belonging to covered populations almost uniformly practice digital skills at a lower rate than those that do not belong to covered populations. Here, the largest gaps can be found in using online financial services like banking, investing, or paying bills (20.3 percentage point

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[233] NTIA, 2021 Internet Use Survey (accessed August 29, 2023).

gap), telecommuting using the internet (17.8 percentage point gap), and requesting services provided by others via the internet (15.2 percentage point gap).

The only digital skill for which individuals in covered populations outpace their counterparts is in posting or uploading blog posts, videos, or other original content, which only 20.6 percent of those in covered populations performed recently compared to a rate of 18.8 percent for non-covered populations.

Table 20. Digital literacy in Georgia covered populations[234]

Online activity	Covered group		Non-covered group		Gap	
Uses text messaging or instant messaging	92.1%		97.8%		-5.7%	
Uses email	90.4%		98.3%		-8.0%	
Uses online social networks	71.0%		85.9%		-14.8%	
Shops, makes travel reservations, or uses other consumer services online	67.8%		82.1%		-14.4%	
Uses online financial services like banking, investing, paying bills	68.7%		89.0%		-20.3%	
Watches videos online	60.9%		73.9%		-13.0%	
Participates in online video or voice calls or conferencing	60.4%		72.1%		-11.7%	
Streams or downloads music, radio, podcasts, etc.	52.6%		66.5%		-13.9%	
Requests services provided by other people via the internet	36.9%		52.0%		-15.2%	
Accessing government services	34.0%		42.4%		-8.4%	
Takes class or participates in job training online	25.0%		29.1%		-4.1%	
Interacts with household equipment using the internet	20.0%		28.7%		-8.7%	
Telecommutes using the internet	21.5%		39.2%		-17.8%	
Searches for a job online	18.2%		24.8%		-6.6%	
Posts or uploads blog posts, videos, or other original content	20.6%		18.8%		1.8%	
Uses the internet to sell goods	8.7%		9.9%		-1.2%	
Offers services for sale via the internet	8.5%		13.9%		-5.4%	

The digital skills discrepancies are greatest for individuals who are at or above 60 years of age. For this covered population, not a single online activity is more frequently practiced by aging individuals compared to younger individuals. Additionally, individuals living with disabilities, living in rural areas, and living in low-income homes trailed measurably behind higher-income individuals. The consistent degree to which these covered populations underperform in key digital skills illustrates the urgent need for digital skills training for all four groups.

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[234] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

Table 21. Digital literacy in aging and younger populations[235]

Online activity	Aging	Younger	Gap
Uses text messaging or instant messaging	83.4%	97.1%	-13.7%
Uses email	82.6%	95.5%	-13.0%
Uses online social networks	55.1%	81.8%	-26.7%
Shops, makes travel reservations, or uses other consumer services online	58.9%	75.5%	-16.6%
Uses online financial services like banking, investing, paying bills	62.7%	76.5%	-13.8%
Watches videos online	38.8%	72.7%	-34.0%
Participates in online video or voice calls or conferencing	44.7%	69.9%	-25.2%
Streams or downloads music, radio, podcasts, etc.	28.4%	65.3%	-36.8%
Requests services provided by other people via the internet	23.4%	46.3%	-22.9%
Accessing government services	32.1%	37.3%	-5.2%
Takes class or participates in job training online	9.6%	31.2%	-21.6%
Interacts with household equipment using the internet	17.1%	23.9%	-6.8%
Telecommutes using the internet	12.0%	30.3%	-18.3%
Searches for a job online	6.4%	24.2%	-17.8%
Posts or uploads blog posts, videos, or other original content	9.9%	23.9%	-14.1%
Uses the internet to sell goods	4.2%	10.6%	-6.4%
Offers services for sale via the internet	4.7%	11.4%	-6.7%

Table 22. Digital literacy in people with disabilities and people without disabilities[236]

Online activity	People with disabilities	People without disabilities	Gap
Uses text messaging or instant messaging	83.2%	94.8%	-11.6%
Uses email	84.3%	93.1%	-8.9%
Uses online social networks	61.0%	76.6%	-15.6%
Shops, makes travel reservations, or uses other consumer services online	51.0%	73.6%	-22.6%
Uses online financial services like banking, investing, paying bills	61.0%	74.4%	-13.3%
Watches videos online	51.0%	65.6%	-14.6%
Participates in online video or voice calls or conferencing	49.4%	65.1%	-15.7%
Streams or downloads music, radio, podcasts, etc.	40.3%	57.7%	-17.4%
Requests services provided by other people via the internet	28.0%	41.9%	-13.9%
Accessing government services	34.2%	36.2%	-1.9%
Takes class or participates in job training online	14.3%	27.0%	-12.8%
Interacts with household equipment using the internet	14.8%	23.0%	-8.2%
Telecommutes using the internet	6.6%	27.8%	-21.2%
Searches for a job online	7.5%	21.1%	-13.5%
Posts or uploads blog posts, videos, or other original content	11.5%	21.4%	-9.9%
Uses the internet to sell goods	10.2%	8.8%	1.4%
Offers services for sale via the internet	4.7%	10.3%	-5.6%

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[235] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).
[236] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

Table 23. Digital literacy in rural and metropolitan populations[237]

Online activity	Rural		Metropolitan		Gap	
Uses text messaging or instant messaging	90.5%		94.1%		-3.6%	
Uses email	86.4%		93.3%		-6.9%	
Uses online social networks	67.6%		76.3%		-8.7%	
Shops, makes travel reservations, or uses other consumer services online	67.2%		72.0%		-4.7%	
Uses online financial services like banking, investing, paying bills	65.3%		74.4%		-9.2%	
Watches videos online	65.7%		63.8%		1.9%	
Participates in online video or voice calls or conferencing	48.5%		66.1%		-17.6%	
Streams or downloads music, radio, podcasts, etc.	54.0%		56.2%		-2.2%	
Requests services provided by other people via the internet	21.6%		43.9%		-22.3%	
Accessing government services	23.3%		38.2%		-14.9%	
Takes class or participates in job training online	24.7%		25.9%		-1.2%	
Interacts with household equipment using the internet	12.3%		23.9%		-11.7%	
Telecommutes using the internet	15.4%		27.5%		-12.1%	
Searches for a job online	24.2%		18.9%		5.4%	
Posts or uploads blog posts, videos, or other original content	23.7%		19.8%		3.9%	
Uses the internet to sell goods	3.1%		10.0%		-6.9%	
Offers services for sale via the internet	4.2%		10.7%		-6.5%	

Table 24. Digital literacy in low and higher-income populations[238]

Online activity	Low income		Higher income		Gap	
Uses text messaging or instant messaging	89.8%		94.7%		-5.0%	
Uses email	86.3%		94.1%		-7.8%	
Uses online social networks	74.3%		75.2%		-1.0%	
Shops, makes travel reservations, or uses other consumer services online	55.4%		76.1%		-20.7%	
Uses online financial services like banking, investing, paying bills	55.5%		78.3%		-22.9%	
Watches videos online	58.3%		65.8%		-7.5%	
Participates in online video or voice calls or conferencing	51.9%		67.0%		-15.1%	
Streams or downloads music, radio, podcasts, etc.	52.2%		57.1%		-4.9%	
Requests services provided by other people via the internet	28.1%		44.2%		-16.1%	
Accessing government services	26.7%		38.8%		-12.1%	
Takes class or participates in job training online	20.7%		27.3%		-6.6%	
Interacts with household equipment using the internet	12.3%		25.2%		-12.9%	
Telecommutes using the internet	12.1%		29.8%		-17.7%	
Searches for a job online	22.5%		18.8%		3.7%	
Posts or uploads blog posts, videos, or other original content	19.6%		20.6%		-1.0%	
Uses the internet to sell goods	4.8%		10.2%		-5.4%	
Offers services for sale via the internet	5.8%		10.9%		-5.2%	

Veterans and racial or ethnic minorities were also evaluated for digital skills use, although neither group illustrates a particularly urgent need for skills training as both groups almost uniformly outperform their non-covered counterparts. The frequency of online activity performance does not necessarily imply competence or success in those activities. Therefore, digital skills training still may have a meaningful impact on both groups.

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[237] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).
[238] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

Table 25. Digital literacy in veteran and non-veteran populations[239]

Online activity	Veteran	Non-veteran	Gap
Uses text messaging or instant messaging	95.9%	93.2%	2.7%
Uses email	93.2%	92.3%	0.9%
Uses online social networks	70.1%	74.9%	-4.8%
Shops, makes travel reservations, or uses other consumer services online	76.8%	71.8%	5.0%
Uses online financial services like banking, investing, paying bills	87.1%	74.1%	12.9%
Watches videos online	68.6%	63.5%	5.1%
Participates in online video or voice calls or conferencing	61.4%	63.8%	-2.5%
Streams or downloads music, radio, podcasts, etc.	52.4%	56.2%	-3.8%
Requests services provided by other people via the internet	41.7%	41.6%	0.1%
Accessing government services	43.1%	35.8%	7.3%
Takes class or participates in job training online	26.1%	26.0%	0.2%
Interacts with household equipment using the internet	28.0%	22.3%	5.7%
Telecommutes using the internet	25.9%	26.5%	-0.6%
Searches for a job online	21.3%	20.1%	1.3%
Posts or uploads blog posts, videos, or other original content	19.0%	20.3%	-1.2%
Uses the internet to sell goods	15.7%	8.7%	6.9%
Offers services for sale via the internet	12.2%	9.9%	2.3%

Table 26. Digital literacy in racial/ethnic minority and non-minority populations[240]

Online activity	Minority	Non-minority	Gap
Uses text messaging or instant messaging	96.0%	92.0%	4.1%
Uses email	91.7%	92.6%	-1.0%
Uses online social networks	76.5%	74.0%	2.5%
Shops, makes travel reservations, or uses other consumer services online	71.4%	71.2%	0.2%
Uses online financial services like banking, investing, paying bills	66.2%	77.6%	-11.3%
Watches videos online	67.8%	61.6%	6.1%
Participates in online video or voice calls or conferencing	67.7%	60.7%	7.0%
Streams or downloads music, radio, podcasts, etc.	57.9%	54.6%	3.4%
Requests services provided by other people via the internet	46.9%	36.2%	10.7%
Accessing government services	33.7%	37.5%	-3.7%
Takes class or participates in job training online	28.3%	24.0%	4.3%
Interacts with household equipment using the internet	21.7%	22.5%	-0.7%
Telecommutes using the internet	25.8%	25.6%	0.2%
Searches for a job online	21.6%	18.4%	3.2%
Posts or uploads blog posts, videos, or other original content	26.2%	16.5%	9.7%
Uses the internet to sell goods	12.5%	6.6%	5.9%
Offers services for sale via the internet	10.4%	9.3%	1.1%

3.2.2.3 Telemedicine needs

Increasingly, there is a use and need for a distinguished set of digital skills involved in telemedicine and remote health care. These activities include communicating with health professionals over the internet, researching health information online, using an electronic health monitoring device (for example, sending data to a provider from a smart watch or pacemaker), and accessing health or health insurance records online.

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[239] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).
[240] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

Table 27. Telemedicinal digital literacy in Georgia and the U.S.[241]

Telemedicine activity	Georgia		Nation		Gap	
Communicates with a health professional over the internet	40.3%		48.1%		-7.8%	
Researches health information online	44.8%		52.9%		-8.2%	
Uses an electronic health monitoring service	8.5%		8.4%		0.1%	
Accesses health or insurance records online	42.1%		53.1%		-11.0%	

Among Georgians belonging to covered populations, telemedicine is less frequently practiced compared to non-covered populations. These gaps are especially prevalent in communicating with a health professional over the internet (13.5 percentage point gap), researching health information online (10.9 percentage point gap), and accessing health or insurance records online (16.8 percentage point gap).

Table 28. Telemedicinal digital literacy in covered and non-covered populations[242]

Telemedicine activity	Covered groups		Non-covered groups		Gap	
Communicates with a health professional over the internet	36.9%		50.4%		-13.5%	
Researches health information online	41.9%		52.8%		-10.9%	
Uses an electronic health monitoring service	8.2%		9.9%		-1.7%	
Accesses health or insurance records online	38.1%		54.9%		-16.8%	

Among the covered populations, individuals living in low-income households and individuals living in rural areas exhibit the most urgent needs for increased telemedicine skills—based on both their reported frequency of participation in telemedicine (which is notably low) and given the difficulties in traveling long distances and at inconvenient times for rural and lower-income individuals.

Georgia residents that are racial or ethnic minorities also participate less in telemedicine activities. Given how well racial or ethnic minorities perform compared to other individuals for non-telehealth-related online activities, one would not expect this kind of a discrepancy. Therefore, these data indicate that racial or ethnic minorities in Georgia might benefit from a concerted focus upon further education in digital skills related to telemedicine.

Adults at or above 60 years of age may also benefit from specific telemedicine education given their increased risk for medical needs, however this group does not report a particular lack in telemedicine participation. Rather, aging individuals just outperform younger individuals across all measured telemedicine activities.

Two other covered populations, people with disabilities and veterans, outperform their non-covered counterparts, perhaps suggesting that telehealth resources in Georgia are accessible for people with disabilities and the efficacy of Georgia's Veteran's Affairs health care facilities.

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[241] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).
[242] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

Table 29. Telemedicinal digital literacy in various covered populations[243]

	Telemedicine activity	Low income		Higher income		Gap	
Income	Communicates with a health professional over the internet	23.2%		45.5%		-22.3%	
	Researches health information online	26.1%		50.4%		-24.4%	
	Uses an electronic health monitoring service	7.0%		9.0%		-2.0%	
	Accesses health or insurance records online	20.7%		48.6%		-27.9%	
	Telemedicine activity	**Aging**		**Younger**		**Gap**	
Age	Communicates with a health professional over the internet	41.4%		39.9%		1.5%	
	Researches health information online	47.1%		43.9%		3.2%	
	Uses an electronic health monitoring service	9.2%		8.3%		1.0%	
	Accesses health or insurance records online	42.9%		41.8%		1.2%	
	Telemedicine activity	**Veteran**		**Non-veteran**		**Gap**	
Veteran status	Communicates with a health professional over the internet	60.4%		39.3%		21.1%	
	Researches health information online	61.1%		43.9%		17.2%	
	Uses an electronic health monitoring service	7.8%		8.7%		-0.9%	
	Accesses health or insurance records online	60.8%		41.1%		19.7%	
	Telemedicine activity	**With disabilities**		**Without disabilities**		**Gap**	
Disability	Communicates with a health professional over the internet	49.7%		39.3%		10.4%	
	Researches health information online	51.1%		44.0%		7.1%	
	Uses an electronic health monitoring service	11.1%		8.2%		2.9%	
	Accesses health or insurance records online	44.8%		41.8%		3.0%	
	Telemedicine activity	**Minority**		**Non-minority**		**Gap**	
Race	Communicates with a health professional over the internet	33.5%		44.9%		-11.4%	
	Researches health information online	37.7%		49.5%		-11.8%	
	Uses an electronic health monitoring service	9.2%		8.0%		1.2%	
	Accesses health or insurance records online	34.9%		46.9%		-12.0%	
	Telemedicine activity	**Rural**		**Metropolitan**		**Gap**	
Rurality	Communicates with a health professional over the internet	22.0%		43.6%		-21.6%	
	Researches health information online	29.8%		47.4%		-17.6%	
	Uses an electronic health monitoring service	2.2%		9.7%		-7.5%	
	Accesses health or insurance records online	22.9%		45.5%		-22.6%	

3.2.2.4 Online security and privacy needs

Theft, fraud, phishing, and misinformation are all commonplace on the internet, and fully realizing digital connectivity in Georgia requires users to be safe from such online risks. In the past year, 13.1 percent of individuals in covered populations in Georgia report having been the victim of an online security or privacy breach. Therefore, the State of Georgia has used data from the Current Population Survey and the NTIA Internet Use Survey to evaluate the extents to which various covered populations perceive and feel confident in their ability to disarm online security and privacy threats. The key findings are as follows:

1. Compared to the nation, Georgia residents are consistently less concerned about online security and privacy concerns.

2. Identity theft and credit card fraud are the two online security breaches that are concerning to most Georgia residents.

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[243] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023). Note: Data for incarcerated individuals and individuals with language barriers were not available.

3. Covered populations demonstrate similar concerns of online security and privacy concerns compared to non-covered populations in Georgia.

4. Members of covered populations do not appear meaningfully more dissuaded than non-covered populations to undertake various online activities because of security or privacy concerns.

Identity theft and credit card fraud were the two online security risks that concerned the most Georgia residents. This is in line with the national ranking. Other concerns such as third-party tracking, government tracking, and online threats were of less concern.

Table 30. Main online security or privacy concerns in Georgia and the U.S.[244]

(Non-exclusive) main online security or privacy concerns	Georgia	Nation	Gap
Identity theft	44.0%	50.7%	-6.7%
Credit card fraud	33.3%	42.1%	-8.8%
Third party tracking	18.6%	26.4%	-7.8%
Government tracking	16.7%	19.0%	-2.3%
Online threats	16.9%	23.1%	-6.2%
Other	10.4%	13.1%	-2.7%

Covered populations and non-covered populations are similarly concerned about online security and privacy risks in the State of Georgia. However, concern over online security and privacy does not necessarily correlate to an ability to effectively combat online risks, and, as such, covered populations could still benefit from additional educational programming.

Table 31. Main online security or privacy concerns in covered and non-covered populations[245]

(Non-exclusive) main online security or privacy concerns	Covered groups	Non-covered groups	Gap
Identity theft	44.4%	43.1%	1.3%
Credit card fraud	34.2%	31.3%	2.9%
Third party tracking	18.7%	18.1%	0.6%
Government tracking	17.7%	13.3%	4.3%
Online threats	17.1%	16.3%	0.8%
Other	10.9%	7.8%	3.1%

Among the specific covered populations, people with disabilities, veterans, and individuals at or above 60 years of age tend to be the most concerned about these risks. Lower-income and racial or ethnic minorities express the least concern over these issues. Similarly, while it is not inherently beneficial to increase concern around privacy and security, online security education may increase awareness of these concerns in a positive way, especially for lower-income households and racial or ethnic minorities.

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[244] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).
[245] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

Table 32. Main online security or privacy concerns in various covered populations[246]

	(Non-exclusive) main online security or privacy concerns	Low income	Higher-income	Gap
Income	Identity theft	39.0%	45.6%	-6.6%
	Credit card fraud	25.4%	35.8%	-10.4%
	Third party tracking	14.6%	19.9%	-5.3%
	Government tracking	14.1%	17.4%	-3.4%
	Online threats	13.7%	17.9%	-4.3%
	Other	8.2%	11.1%	-2.9%
	(Non-exclusive) main online security or privacy concerns	Aging	Younger	Gap
Age	Identity theft	51.9%	41.4%	10.5%
	Credit card fraud	45.4%	29.2%	16.1%
	Third party tracking	26.4%	16.0%	10.3%
	Government tracking	20.0%	15.5%	4.5%
	Online threats	19.8%	16.0%	3.9%
	Other	14.2%	9.1%	5.0%
	(Non-exclusive) main online security or privacy concerns	Veterans	Non-veterans	Gap
Veteran status	Identity theft	67.8%	42.4%	25.4%
	Credit card fraud	59.4%	32.0%	27.4%
	Third party tracking	41.2%	17.0%	24.2%
	Government tracking	38.6%	15.0%	23.7%
	Online threats	31.4%	15.9%	15.6%
	Other	12.4%	10.1%	2.3%
	(Non-exclusive) main online security or privacy concerns	With disabilities	Without disabilities	Gap
Disability	Identity theft	51.3%	43.2%	8.1%
	Credit card fraud	48.1%	31.7%	16.4%
	Third party tracking	32.1%	17.1%	15.0%
	Government tracking	25.3%	15.7%	9.6%
	Online threats	29.1%	15.6%	13.5%
	Other	24.0%	8.9%	15.2%
	(Non-exclusive) main online security or privacy concerns	Minority	Non-minority	Gap
Race	Identity theft	43.4%	44.5%	-1.1%
	Credit card fraud	31.0%	34.9%	-3.9%
	Third party tracking	15.1%	21.0%	-5.8%
	Government tracking	14.7%	18.0%	-3.3%
	Online threats	14.1%	18.8%	-4.7%
	Other	7.9%	12.1%	-4.3%
	(Non-exclusive) main online security or privacy concerns	Rural	Metropolitan	Gap
Rurality	Identity theft	39.0%	44.9%	-5.9%
	Credit card fraud	24.8%	34.9%	-10.1%
	Third party tracking	16.7%	19.0%	-2.2%
	Government tracking	18.3%	16.4%	2.0%
	Online threats	16.7%	17.0%	-0.3%
	Other	14.7%	9.6%	5.1%

It may be more meaningful for the identification of barriers to examine the impacts of concern rather than level of concern. An estimated 14.0 percent of Georgia residents chose not to buy goods or services online in the past year because of concerns regarding privacy or security. Similarly, 10.7 percent chose not to post photos or other information to social media for these

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[246] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023). Note: Data for incarcerated individuals and individuals with language barriers were not available.

reasons. Georgia residents appear less dissuaded from online activities because of security concerns than the rest of the nation. While the goal is for all individuals to feel safe and confident in their performance of online activities, it remains possible that these data are more suggestive of a lack of information or awareness rather than increased capacity for self-protection.

Table 33. Portion of individuals dissuaded from performing online activities by privacy or security concerns in Georgia and the U.S.[247]

Concerns about privacy or security stopped someone in your household from:	Georgia	Nation	Gap
Conducting financial transactions online	1.7%	3.2%	-1.5%
Buying goods or services online	14.0%	18.0%	-4.0%
Posting photos or other information to social media	10.7%	13.5%	-2.9%
Expressing an opinion on a controversial or political issue online	9.3%	13.7%	-4.4%
Searching for information on a web search engine	7.4%	13.0%	-5.6%

Members of covered populations do not meaningfully differ from non-covered populations by these metrics. Therefore, it is likely that security and privacy-based educational programming may be similarly beneficial to covered and non-covered populations.

Table 34. Portion of individuals dissuaded from performing online activities by privacy or security concerns in covered and non-covered populations[248]

Concerns about privacy or security stopped someone in your household from:	Covered populations	Non-covered populations	Gap
Conducting financial transactions online	1.8%	1.4%	0.4%
Buying goods or services online	13.4%	16.5%	-3.0%
Posting photos or other information to social media	9.7%	14.1%	-4.5%
Expressing an opinion on a controversial or political issue online	9.6%	8.7%	0.9%
Searching for information on a web search engine	7.4%	7.9%	-0.5%

3.2.2.5 Device adoption needs

Meaningful use of the internet requires the meaningful use of internet-enabled devices such as desktop and laptop computers, tablets, and, in some instances, smartphones. While only 3 percent of Georgia residents who do not use internet at home self-identified adequate computer device access as a barrier to their households' connectivity, other data suggest a computer device ownership gap among covered populations. Therefore, the State of Georgia has used data from the American Community Survey to evaluate the extent to which Georgia residents as a whole,

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[247] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).
[248] U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

and various covered populations specifically, have access to computer devices in their homes. The key findings are as follows:

1. Georgia very slightly outperforms the nation in desktop or laptop access rates.

2. Device access rates are uniformly lower for members of covered populations compared to non-covered populations.

3. Low-income households are in the most urgent need for increased desktop or laptop computer access, and racial or ethnic minorities, individuals at or above 60 years of age, individuals living with a disability, and English language learners also lag their non-covered counterparts to varying degrees.

The State of Georgia performs similarly to the nation in computer device ownership of any kind, with 94.6 percent of individuals claiming to have access to a computer in the house compared to 95.0 percent nationally. However, these devices are not uniformly capable. While tablets and smartphones are increasingly effective for many online tasks, they are still ultimately not adequate for full realization of digital connectivity. In Georgia 82.9 percent of individuals have access to a desktop or laptop in their home, which is 2.4 percentage points above the national rate of 80.5 percent, but still leaves opportunity for growth. Device adoption statistics for the state and nation are presented in Table 35 below:

Table 35. Device adoption rates in Georgia and the U.S.[249]

Computer in the house	Georgia		Nation		Gap	
Computer device of any kind	94.6%		95.0%		-0.4%	
Desktop or laptop	82.9%		80.5%		2.4%	
Tablet	69.6%		63.8%		5.8%	
Smartphone only	7.3%		9.1%		-1.8%	

Device ownership is reportedly stratified by membership in covered populations. For example, 99.2 percent of individuals not belonging to a covered population have access to a computer at home, while only 92.7 percent of individuals belonging to covered populations report the same access. This device gap grows when limiting the inquiry to desktop or laptop devices and tablets, to which members of covered populations are reportedly 13.6 and 13.8 percentage points less likely to have access at the home, respectively.

Additionally, 8.5 percent of members of covered populations (compared to 4.1 percent of non-covered populations) report only having access to a smartphone at home. While this is technically counted as a computer device of any kind, a smartphone alone is insufficient for a myriad of key

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[249] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

online activities. These data suggest that device ownership is still a meaningful barrier to connectivity for members of covered populations in Georgia.

Table 36. Device adoption rates in Georgia covered populations[250]

Computer in the house	Covered groups	Non-covered groups	Gap
Computer device of any kind	92.9%	99.2%	-6.3%
Desktop or laptop	79.1%	92.7%	-13.6%
Tablet	65.8%	79.6%	-13.8%
Smartphone only	8.5%	4.1%	4.5%

Among covered populations, individuals living in low-income households display the most urgent needs for adequate computer devices. Low-income individuals underperform every other covered population in ownership of computer devices of any kind, desktop or laptop computers, and tablet computers.

People with disabilities and aging individuals also demonstrate somewhat urgent needs for adequate computer devices—with gaps between people with disabilities and people without disabilities of 13.3 percentage points and gaps between aging and younger individuals of 9.5 percentage points for laptop or desktop device ownership. These gaps might be explained by accessibility concerns regarding various devices. As such, accessibility concerns regarding devices themselves serve to reemphasize the need for *adequate* devices.

English language learners also exhibit a need in device adoption. In addition to a 10.3 percentage-point-gap between English language learners and fluent speakers, a notably outsized portion of English language learners only use a smartphone at the home (14.8 percent). This is related to their tendency to only subscribe to cellular data plans, although it is unclear which factor influences the other. In either case, smartphone only use is not sufficient for fully realizing the benefits of internet use.

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[250] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023).

Table 37. Device adoption rates in various covered populations[251]

	Computer in the house	Low income		Higher income		Gap	
Income	Computer device of any kind	84.5%		97.9%		-13.5%	
	Desktop or laptop	63.8%		89.1%		-25.3%	
	Tablet	52.9%		75.1%		-22.2%	
	Smartphone only	13.2%		5.4%		7.9%	
	Computer in the house	Minority		Non-minority		Gap	
Race	Computer device of any kind	94.2%		95.1%		-0.9%	
	Desktop or laptop	80.4%		85.2%		-4.8%	
	Tablet	68.8%		70.5%		-1.7%	
	Smartphone only	8.6%		6.0%		2.6%	
	Computer in the house	Aging		Younger		Gap	
Age	Computer device of any kind	90.4%		95.8%		-5.4%	
	Desktop or laptop	75.4%		84.8%		-9.5%	
	Tablet	57.7%		72.8%		-15.1%	
	Smartphone only	9.5%		6.7%		2.8%	
	Computer in the house	With disabilities		Without disabilities		Gap	
Disability	Computer device of any kind	87.6%		95.7%		-8.2%	
	Desktop or laptop	71.4%		84.6%		-13.3%	
	Tablet	57.3%		71.5%		-14.2%	
	Smartphone only	10.3%		6.8%		3.4%	
	Computer in the house	English learner		English fluency		Gap	
English proficiency	Computer device of any kind	94.9%		94.6%		0.3%	
	Desktop or laptop	73.0%		83.4%		-10.3%	
	Tablet	58.2%		70.2%		-12.0%	
	Smartphone only	14.8%		6.9%		7.9%	
	Computer in the house	Veteran		Non-veteran		Gap	
Veteran status	Computer device of any kind	94.8%		94.6%		0.1%	
	Desktop or laptop	84.7%		82.8%		1.9%	
	Tablet	66.7%		69.8%		-3.1%	
	Smartphone only	6.3%		7.4%		-1.1%	

3.2.2.6 *Online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services needs*

Without accessible online content and resources, many individuals will be precluded from meaningfully using the internet. In addition to the above, experts consider the accessibility of online content and services to be an essential measurement for benchmarking digital connectivity. Unfortunately, no robust data sets currently exist.

For accessibility to be measured, a finite choice of websites and online resources must be selected, and for accessibility best practices to be actualized, web developers from each of those

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[251] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 2021 (accessed August 29, 2023). Note: Data for incarcerated individuals were not available.

(assumedly) diverse sources must play key roles. In practice, measuring or coordinating holistic web accessibility is not realistic, but localities can ensure all online government resources and services are accessible to residents.

An audit of government websites would organize, document, and measure the accessibility of the various resources and services offered online. There are low-burden means by which state or local agencies can review individual websites via online accessibility calculators. These calculators examine source code for websites to check against the most recent WCAG 2.1[252] online accessibility standards. These standards include best practices for content perceivability, resource operability, information understandability, and tool robustness.

3.2.3 Broadband affordability

Perhaps the most widely known and used intervention to lower the cost of internet access is the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The ACP subsidizes up to $30 per month (or $75 for Tribal applicants) for broadband for qualifying households and may include a one-time subsidy toward buying a laptop or tablet. However, despite the benefit of the subsidy, the ACP is known to be chronically undersubscribed. In Georgia, an estimated 38.3 percent of eligible households have enrolled, a rate slightly higher than the estimated national level of 36 percent, but still leaving significant opportunity for growth.

Table 38. ACP enrollment in Georgia and the U.S.[253]

	Georgia	Nation
Households enrolled	664,919	19,903,735
Households estimated eligible	1,734,313	55,266,900
Portion of eligible households enrolled	38.3%	36%

Households can be determined to be eligible through many criteria, including if they earn up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level or participate in one of many federal or state support programs (for example, the National School Lunch Program). As a result, eligibility for the program is highly aligned with members of covered populations. An estimated 50 percent of individuals belonging to covered populations are eligible for the ACP.

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[252] W3C, Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/ (accessed August 19, 2023).
[253] Enrollment counts from USAC's ACP Enrollment and Claims Tracker, accurate as of August 28, 2023, https://www.usac.org/about/affordable-connectivity-program/acp-enrollment-and-claims-tracker/ (accessed August 29, 2023). Estimates of eligible households based on proprietary model that uses American Community Survey Public Use Microdata to estimate number of households qualifying for ACP via several of its eligibility criteria.

The percentage of ACP enrollment by county shows that participation is highest throughout the southwestern, south-central, and central regions of the state and lowest in the north central, northeast, and coastal regions (Figure 7).

Figure 7. ACP enrollment in Georgia by county

4   Collaboration and partner engagement

4.1   Coordination and outreach strategy

The Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) developed a strategy to engage a fully diverse and comprehensive set of stakeholders throughout the State of Georgia. GTA's approach to collaborating with key constituencies and partners has been inclusive, extensive, and transparent. At each stage of planning and engagement, GTA implements several strategies to ensure that the State's broadband and digital connectivity goals are inclusive and feedback-driven:

1. In 2022, GTA hired a full-time Digital Connectivity Manager who leads digital connectivity strategy development, planning, and outreach efforts for the State.

2. GTA leverages a wide range of modalities for outreach and engagement, including:

    a. Public listening sessions (winter and spring 2023)

    b. Facilitated workshops with stakeholder organizations (spring 2023)

    c. Regionally based statewide phone survey to understand residents' internet-related needs and challenges, with an emphasis on the needs of covered populations (spring 2023)

    d. Online surveys and inventory tools to gather information about stakeholder organizations' capacity and program assets related to digital connectivity, perceptions about the needs of covered populations they serve, and needs for broadband access to achieve their mission

    e. Regional roundtable sessions with stakeholder organizations and members of the public about lived experience (fall 2023)

    f. Cross-region and cross-cutting action planning sessions (fall 2023)

    g. Statewide digital connectivity symposium (fall 2023)

    h. One-on-one and small group engagements with stakeholder organizations (ongoing)

    i. Monthly meetings with its 30+ member statewide Digital Connectivity Advisory Committee, which includes organizations representing covered populations as well as state agencies, universities, faith-based organizations, civil rights organizations, housing authorities, service providers, and civic associations (ongoing)

3. GTA creates multi-channel communications about events and initiatives, participation in statewide conferences, and other external meetings related to broadband and digital connectivity.

When engaging the public, GTA takes specific steps to collect meaningful data on covered populations. Public engagements are held in person at local CAIs to encourage community participation by hosting events in familiar and accessible locations. GTA is also available to attend additional organization and community meetings in all parts of the state on a requested basis.

For more details about GTA's outreach efforts conducted in the winter and spring of 2023, see the State of Georgia's BEAD Five-Year Action Plan.

Table 39. Digital connectivity outreach goals and objectives

Goal	Approach	Measurable objective	Desired outcome
Inclusively enhance the State Digital Connectivity Plan	Participants will review the Plan, provide constructive feedback, and enhance it with their unique perspectives. GTA's planning process will accurately reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of the communities served, ultimately contributing to a more equitable digital landscape.	Incorporate feedback and recommendations from at community members across diverse stakeholders into the Plan by the end of December 2023.	The Plan outlines actionable steps developed through collaborative efforts addressing core areas of digital connectivity such as broadband affordability, device ownership and technical support, accessibility, cybersecurity, and digital literacy/skills training.
Develop actionable steps for improved digital connectivity	Participants will identify gaps and areas for improvement within the ecosystem. This involves comprehensive discussions around the core areas of digital connectivity, such as broadband affordability, device ownership, accessibility, cybersecurity, and digital literacy/skills training. By the end of this initiative, GTA and its stakeholder partners will have a collection of actionable steps that will effectively enhance the	Incorporate inputs on gaps, areas for improvement, and actionable steps community members across diverse stakeholders into the Plan by the end of December 2023.	The Plan includes identified gaps and areas for improvement from community members and stakeholders and actionable steps on these.

Goal	Approach	Measurable objective	Desired outcome
	implementation strategy in our plan.		
Empower future funding opportunities	Through coordinated efforts with partners, Georgia stakeholder organizations will be strategically positions for future funding opportunities. They will be equipped with the tools and knowledge to effectively navigate the funding landscape and leverage resources that advance their digital connectivity initiatives, effectively addressing digital equity challenges in their communities.	Prepare and enable local entities and organizations to effectively navigate the funding landscape by the end of the initiative.	Empower entities to strategically leverage resources for future funding opportunities.
Through state symposium and roundtable engagements, strengthen service-based interrelationships among stakeholder organizations	Through engagements, strengthen service-based interrelationships and develop capacity among stakeholder organizations to develop framework for a future digital connectivity consortium or network.	Initiate the formation of a future digital connectivity consortium or network, supported by the State's digital connectivity capacity program.	Digital connectivity consortium or network functions to helps to sustain digital connectivity efforts in Georgia beyond the State's digital connectivity capacity program.

4.1.1 Targeted outreach efforts

GTA is at the forefront of driving the state's digital transformation. Recognizing the paramount importance of digital connectivity for every Georgian, we have outlined a strategic blueprint for targeted outreach. We aim to ensure that every individual, community, and stakeholder is informed, engaged, and empowered in this digital evolution.

Broadband affordability outreach and training campaign

Working closely with Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) outreach grantees, stakeholder organizations, ISPs, and local municipalities, GTA will intensify outreach initiatives using digital and traditional media platforms for the entirety of the ACP program's existence. Should the ACP program conclude, GTA remains committed to continuously updating the community about affordable internet packages and alternatives to ensure uninterrupted services for community members who want to connect. This strategy is poised to engage households directly,

heightening their awareness about broadband and its benefits. Central to our efforts are training and resources provided by the FCC and organizations like EducationSuperHighway. The vision is to transform community leaders and their teams into digital champions, guiding their constituencies toward digital connectivity. Equipped with this expertise, they'll be instrumental in assisting their communities to subscribe to high-speed internet services and fully capitalize on the advantages of ACP.

Championing FCC challenges
GTA persistently supports individual and community-based challenges to the FCC broadband map to ensure that every Georgian's connectivity needs are met. This includes demonstrating the map and providing a 'map challenge' one-pager to address any discrepancies or gaps in broadband coverage, leading to more accurate and effective infrastructure planning.

Storytelling and story-mapping
Beyond just numbers and statistics, individual stories paint the true picture of digital connectivity. GTA is passionate about creating platforms where people can share their digital experiences, whether the challenges they face or the progress they've witnessed. These efforts lift our community members' lived experiences to the forefront and humanize activities that could be considered just about the devices and infrastructure. These storytelling efforts are about people and how connectivity affects them, their families, and their community and provide invaluable insights for future strategies.

Digital connectivity insights portal
GTA's website will continue to be a repository of insights, updates, resources, and best practices on digital connectivity. This portal will serve as a one-stop portal for stakeholders, communities, and individuals to stay informed and participate actively in our digital journey.

Presence in conferences and meetings
GTA will actively participate in several state and nationwide conferences and meetings to foster broader collaboration and dissemination of our initiatives. This includes the Statewide Accessibility Conference, Georgia Municipal Associations Summits, Government Technology Summit, and other industry related events and meetings both locally and nationally to continue to contribute to the closing the digital divide. Our presence in these events signifies our commitment to transparency, collaboration, and community-centric solutions.

Our targeted outreach efforts are a blend of mass communication campaigns, digital media marketing, and personalized community-centric engagements. With every Georgian at the heart

of our mission, we are steadfast in our commitment to ensuring that connectivity outreach initiatives leverage our state's resources to inform and empower all.

4.1.2 Public comment

The Georgia Digital Connectivity Plan was made available for public comment from November 7, 2023, to December 8, 2023, to gather feedback from partners and residents and promote transparency in the development of the Plan. GTA posted a draft of the Plan publicly on its website with an invitation to submit comments on the content via diverse channels including mail-in feedback options, in-person and virtual meetings, an online form, and via e-mail. GTA monitored all of these channels for the duration of the comment period.

To encourage broad awareness, participation, and feedback, GTA hosted a hybrid in-person and online statewide Digital Connectivity Symposium on November 14, 2023, to solicit feedback on the Plan and a virtual public meeting on the Plan on December 4, 2023.

GTA carefully considered the feedback it received from a variety of commenters and incorporated this feedback into this Plan. Several entities offered to partner with GTA, an encouraging result of the ongoing outreach and coordination process and were added to the appropriate asset inventory of the Plan. Additionally, many residents provided GTA with programs and organizations to add to the asset inventory.

Many commenters also raised concerns about the needs of the counties in which they reside, frequently requesting greater clarity as to how GTA will address such needs. Accordingly, GTA has developed county level digital equity data for each of Georgia's counties, which delve more deeply into the digital connectivity concerns of each county and underscore the policy decisions expressed throughout this plan. These data can be found in Appendix C: County digital connectivity data.

Likewise, several commenters urged GTA to emphasize the needs of Georgia's covered populations. An example of such is AARP, who noted the necessity of device adoption for aging adults in Georgia. As a result, GTA has produced digital connectivity data for each covered population, which both address the unique concerns and circumstances of each of Georgia's covered populations and further elaborate on GTA's plans regarding each group. This information can be found in Appendix I: Digital connectivity by covered population.

Several commenters offered recommendations regarding increasing GTA's local outreach efforts. These comments included encouraging GTA to use multiple languages in its outreach materials and to further collaborate with units of local government, local media outlets, trusted community organizations, or with local communities themselves. Similarly, comments urged GTA to make a more concerted effort to publicize the benefits and, in some cases, the mere existence of ACP.

Some commenters provided recommendations for GTA to consider as it develops and implements digital connectivity programs—particularly the development or facilitation of courses focused on digital literacy, cybersecurity, and basic computer skills. In a similar vein, some comments emphasized the importance of the training offered to the instructors of these types of digital literacy programs.

More information regarding the comments received on the Plan—and GTA's actions taken in response—can be found in the Record of Public Comments and Actions Taken submitted to NTIA with this Plan and in Appendix G: Changes to the Plan from public comment. GTA looks forward to continuing its robust engagement with the public and with key partners in implementing the Plan.

4.1.3 Partnerships for implementation by covered populations

Comprehensive, continued engagement with partners has informed the development of this Plan and will be key to its implementation. As discussed in Section 5, we will connect, convene, and leverage partnerships with workforce agencies, labor organizations, and institutions of higher learning to implement workforce policy as a means of building equity into digital connectivity efforts.

Through its outreach, GTA has identified relevant workforce development, training, and certification programs offered by higher education institutions and ISPs in the state; these are catalogued in detail in the asset inventory in the State's Five-Year Plan.

Communications Workers of America, a union that participated in the State's outreach efforts, has indicated that it has training resources and is willing to partner with ISPs for training. Southeast Lineman Training Center, a nationally recognized lineworker training school located in Georgia, also indicated interest in supporting efforts by the State to expand the skilled workforce.

ISPs, K-12 and higher education institutions, trade and technical schools, community organizations, and government entities provided information on their needs, goals, and interest in potential partnerships with GTA around workforce development through stakeholder organization surveys. Most respondents (approximately 71 percent) who indicated that they are not currently engaged in workforce development for the communications industry were interested in developing programs.

In implementing this Plan, the State will seek to strengthen relationships between ISPs and training programs (including technical/professional training and certification programs and programs by high schools and technical colleges) to support placing new or retrained workers in viably paying jobs. Alignment between key stakeholders will help ensure programs provide

training based on the skills required by employers, ISPs can lend effective support through apprenticeship and scholarship programs, and workers are prepared for in-demand jobs.

As described in Section 2.2, this Plan is aligned with the efforts and priorities of Georgia's higher education and workforce agencies, including the Technical College System of Georgia. It works closely with the Technical Association of Georgia, Georgia Telecommunications Association, Fiber Network Alliance, Workforce Evolved, Fiber Broadband Association, Southeast Lineman Training Center and other workforce organizations.

4.1.3.1 Low-Income Households

GTA will partner with entities including the Georgia Department of Human Services, Georgia Community Action Agencies, Family Connections Partners, MUST Ministries and local public housing authorities to specifically address the digital needs of low-income households. This partnership will involve organizing digital literacy workshops and providing access to affordable connectivity options and other activities outlined in Section 5. Regular feedback will be collected through community roundtables and surveys to gauge the effectiveness of these initiatives. Documentation of feedback and subsequent actions will be shared via e-mail or on our website maintain transparency and adaptability in our approach.

4.1.3.2 Aging Individuals

Collaboration with organizations such as AARP Georgia, TechSmart for Seniors, regional commissions, and senior centers across the state will concentrate on the unique connectivity requirements of aging individuals. This includes tailored digital literacy programs and accessible technology solutions, geared towards aging individuals in conjunction with conditions rendering internet access and devices as affordable to them. Furthermore, the training programs will include caregivers to help aid aging individuals even with digital training, acknowledging the important role caregivers play in the digital empowerment of aging individuals. Regular updates and feedback from this demographic will be sought through dedicated sessions in community roundtables and townhalls, ensuring their continuous involvement in shaping the digital connectivity plan.

4.1.3.3 Incarcerated Individuals

We will work with the Georgia Department of Corrections, Department of Juvenile Justice and Department of Community Supervision, and rehabilitation-focused nonprofits to facilitate digital literacy and connectivity programs for incarcerated individuals. This effort aims to support their education and mental health access as well as fostering the digital skills they need for successful reentry. Feedback mechanisms will be established within correctional facilities to continuously gather insights and adapt our strategies accordingly.

4.1.3.4   Veterans

Partnerships with the Georgia Department of Veterans Service and various veteran associations are crucial in customizing digital initiatives to align with the unique needs of veterans. Our collaborative efforts will focus on providing specialized training programs that enhance digital skills and create workforce opportunities. Additionally, we will offer support in accessing necessary technology, coupled with resources and assistance tailored to their health and wellbeing. To ensure these initiatives truly resonate with the needs of veterans, we will conduct both in-person and virtual engagement sessions, complemented by surveys. These interactions are designed to collect feedback from the veteran community, providing insights that will guide the continuous refinement and improvement of our strategies.

4.1.3.5   Individuals with disabilities

In collaboration with the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities and various disability advocacy groups, our focus is to ensure that digital solutions are both accessible and inclusive. We will concentrate on providing training in adaptive technology and ensuring barrier-free access to digital resources. To gauge the effectiveness and inclusivity of these solutions, we will actively seek continuous feedback through both in-person and virtual engagement sessions. This feedback will be a critical component in the ongoing adaptation and implementation of our digital connectivity plan.

4.1.3.6   Individuals with language barriers

In partnership with ESL centers and literacy councils, including organizations like Literacy Action Inc., is aimed at overcoming the digital challenges faced by individuals with language barriers. We will provide multilingual support in our digital literacy programs and ensure communication channels are accessible to English learners. To ensure these initiatives are meeting the needs of this group, we will actively solicit feedback in multiple languages through surveys and community engagement activities.

4.1.3.7   Members of racial and ethnic minorities

Recognizing that racial and ethnic minorities are not a monolith but rather encompass a wide range of experiences, needs, and cultural backgrounds, we will form partnerships with organizations like the Urban League, HBCUs, the Latin American Association, International Rescue Committee, and Minority Business Enterprises. These partnerships are crucial in ensuring that digital connectivity programs and updates to this plan are finely tuned to the diverse and intersectional needs of these communities. Our approach is multifaceted, involving culturally responsive programming, workforce development programs, and the implementation of strategies as detailed in Section 5. We will ensure their input and feedback are integral to our community roundtables, action planning sessions, and surveys.

4.1.3.8 Rural residents

In collaboration with the Georgia Rural Health Association, UGA Extension Centers, and regional commissions, we will address the unique digital challenges faced in rural areas. Our efforts will focus on expanding broadband infrastructure, providing targeted digital training tailored to the needs of rural communities, and other implementation strategies in Section 5. To ensure that our strategies are effectively meeting the needs of these communities, we will continuously gather feedback through community roundtables, regional action planning sessions, and in-person and virtual meetings, adapting our approach based on the insights and suggestions received from rural residents and local trusted organizations.

By engaging integrating these contributions into various aspects of the digital connectivity plan, we ensure that each covered population has a direct and meaningful role in shaping the digital connectivity in Georgia. Regular documentation and sharing of feedback and actions taken will keep these partnerships dynamic and responsive to the evolving needs of these communities.

5   Implementation

This section of the Plan describes, at a high level, the implementation strategy and potential future initiatives that relate to each of the key strategies of the Plan, as well as potential timelines.

Digital connectivity in Georgia will likely involve multiple initiatives and efforts associated with each strategy and objective. GTA anticipates the opportunity to use its Digital Equity Capacity Grant to support and develop further digital connectivity capacity in Georgia, in partnership with the many local and regional entities that have participated in GTA's community and stakeholder engagement work over the past year.

At the same time, GTA notes that the ability to develop and sustain these initiatives is dependent on the availability of resources and the many other priorities policymakers have for those resources. For that reason, these potential initiatives are offered as examples of what may be possible if resources are available.

Consistent with its longtime efforts to expand broadband, GTA has designed these initiatives in the most pragmatic way possible—to be actionable, measurable, and sustainable—rather than risk designing more ambitious initiatives that are not financially or practically actionable.

5.1   Implementation strategy and key activities

The following are potential strategies, planned activities, and timelines tied to each digital connectivity challenge described in Section 2.3.

These key challenges represent areas where gaps exist in state, local, and private efforts to address the barriers identified in this Plan. These stem from GTA's extensive assessment of needs (Section 3.2), its collection of data on the current digital connectivity ecosystem through its asset inventory (Section 3.1), and its state agency and partner outreach (Section 2.2 and Section 4). Through its assessment and outreach, GTA has identified gaps in supporting broadband availability, affordability of broadband services and devices with adequate technical support, and digital skills. The strategies and activities in Sections 5.1.1-5.1.4 below are designed to address these gaps. Furthermore, an underlying factor throughout is a lack of funding to meet the needs of covered populations and the need for greater local capacity to support these efforts. Accordingly, the strategies and activities in Section 5.1.5—along with the strategies described in preceding sections—address growing local resources and partnerships between localities and community organizations.

5.1.1   Ongoing engagement with covered populations and state recognized Tribes

As described above and in accordance with the NOFO, GTA will continue to provide opportunities for public comment, collaboration, and ongoing engagement with each covered population

category and key partners as part of its digital opportunity efforts. In addition to specific approaches and activities listed in the following subsections and in Section 5.1, potential strategies for ongoing coordination include:

- Gather data to establish KPIs for measurable objectives without sufficient data for covered populations (see Section 2.3.2)

- Convene key partners to facilitate achieving the state's measurable objectives and outcome areas outlined in this Plan

- Conduct ongoing check-ins with organizations that work with covered populations to review Digital Connectivity Plan goals, data, objectives, and hear from organizations about needs and new data

- Include organizations on outreach for the Digital Equity Capacity Building Grant program

- Include organizations on outreach for facilitating technical assistance for competitive grants

- Hold ongoing informational webinars to continue building digital opportunity capacity within Georgia

5.1.1.1 Community roundtables

- **Purpose:** Engage with diverse community members with lived experience across each of the covered populations in Georgia's 12 regions, including low-income households, aging individuals, incarcerated individuals, veterans, individuals with disabilities, individuals with a language barrier, individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group, and individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.

- **Goal:** Provide a platform for members of the covered populations to discuss their anticipated digital connectivity experiences and concerns.

- **Engagement Strategy**: Actively involve members of the populations covered in roundtable discussions to ensure that their perspectives are heard and considered when making decisions. This approach emphasizes co-creation of solutions and fosters a sense of ownership among participants. This strategy includes:

  o Ensuring that all outreach and engagement tools are accessible to individuals with disabilities and available in multiple languages

  o Utilizing mobile engagement units to reach rural areas, ensuring that geographic isolation does not hinder participation

  o When necessary, partnering with local agricultural cooperatives and rural schools to facilitate meetings and workshops

- o Implement visual and oral communication strategies in roundtable discussions to accommodate various literacy levels. Use simple, jargon-free language and provide illustrative examples to aid understanding

- o Schedule roundtables at various times, including weekends and evenings, to accommodate different work schedules

- o Providing transportation assistance or remote participation options to eliminate barriers to attendance

- **Potential partners:** Members of the covered populations, Regional Commission, Georgia Community Action Agency, UGA Extension Centers, Family Connections Partnerships, local municipalities, local faith-based organizations, organizations that serve and support the covered populations.

- **Potential outcomes:** The development of digital connectivity initiatives that are deeply informed by authentic community feedback. This participatory approach ensures that the initiatives are responsive to the real-world needs and challenges of the covered populations.

5.1.1.2 Regional action planning

- **Purpose:** Foster collaboration among stakeholders within the state's regions to reduce and eliminate silos.

- **Goal:** Devise region-specific digital connectivity plans that offer a comprehensive approach to addressing the digital divide.

- **Engagement Strategy**: Actively engaging stakeholders including the covered populations through structured dialogue, collaborative workshops, and feedback sessions to develop region-specific digital connectivity solutions. This strategy includes:

- o Hosting regional forums that bring together local leaders, community representatives, and subject matter experts to discuss and identify unique regional challenges and opportunities

- o Leveraging hybrid technology for ongoing collaboration and feedback to ensure that the devised plans are dynamic and responsive to the evolving needs of each region

- o Creating a participatory environment where diverse voices are heard and integrated, leading to comprehensive and locally relevant digital connectivity strategies

- Utilize local community networks, social media platforms, and collaboration with organizations directly serving the covered populations to ensure their representation and active participation in the planning process

- **Potential partners:** Regional Commission, Georgia Community Action Agency, Family Connections Partnerships, local municipalities, UGA Extension Centers, K-12 school leaders, post-secondary school leaders, non-profits, local coalitions, business organizations, etc.

- **Potential outcomes:** A local digital connectivity plan with actionable strategies tailored to the digital connectivity needs of each region.

5.1.1.3 Statewide digital connectivity symposium

- **Purpose:** Launch a combined virtual and on-site event to present the Georgia Digital Connectivity Plan.

- **Goal:** Engage attendees in panels, sessions, and capacity-building workshops.

- **Engagement Strategy**: Create an inclusive environment where every participant, especially those from covered populations, can actively engage in panels, sessions, and capacity-building workshops. This strategy includes:

  - Extending targeted invitations through local community organizations and leaders who have established relationships with the covered populations, ensuring their representation and active participation

  - Employing a blend of traditional and digital communication methods such as local media, social media platforms, and community newsletters to reach a broader audience

  - Integrating accessibility features like language translation services, sign language interpretation, and accessibility tools to cater to attendees with disabilities or language barriers

  - Leverage the networks of partner organizations for wider dissemination of information about the symposium and to encourage participation from all covered populations and the organizations that support them

- **Potential partners:** state agencies, state government, educational institutions, health organizations, philanthropic organizations, civil rights organizations, and all other stakeholders, including members of covered populations and organizations that serve them.

- **Potential outcomes:** Equip participants with the tools and insights necessary for effective program development and plan implementation.

5.1.1.4 Virtual and in-person community engagements

- **Purpose:** Conduct virtual or in-person sessions, targeting diverse populations and specialized stakeholders. This includes specifying the use of accessible and multilingual materials and digital platforms to ensure inclusivity and effective communication across all covered populations.

- **Goal:** Obtain direct insights and feedback on digital connectivity from communities and to help to inform community on specialized digital connectivity topics and best practices.

- **Engagement Strategy**: Identify community liaisons with public housing, educational institutions and local government who understand the community's needs and can effectively communicate between the residents and entity. These individuals can play a crucial role in building trust and encouraging participation in digital connectivity programs in-person and online.

- **Partners:** Public housing authorities, civil rights organizations, local government agencies, educational institutions, and all stakeholders interested in engaging in digital connectivity.

- **Potential outcomes:** Increased knowledge of digital connectivity programs and initiatives.

5.1.1.5 Tribal outreach

While there are no federally recognized tribes in Georgia, GTA has conducted digital connectivity outreach to the Georgia Council on American Indian Concerns. Ongoing outreach with the Council is planned quarterly.

Georgia's three state-recognized tribes, Georgia Tribe of Eastern Cherokee, Cherokee of Georgia Tribal Council, and Lower Muskogee Creek Tribe, through engagements with Tribal members who primarily live in rural areas in the state:

- Georgia Tribe of Eastern Cherokee – Although the Tribe has no current land base, most Tribal members still live on parcels of land that were originally allotted as a 640 Acre Reservation located in Dahlonega's North Georgia Mountains on and near the Etowah River in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains.[254]

- Cherokee of Georgia Tribal Council – The Tribal Council is incorporated and has held 501(c)(3) nonprofit status since 1989 for their mission of maintaining a traditional

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[254] Georgia Tribe of Eastern Cherokee, Georgia Council on American Indian Concerns, https://georgiaindiancouncil.com/georgia_tribes/georgia_tribe_of_eastern_cherokee.

Cherokee community, while preserving and sharing their culture and history. The Tribal Grounds of 18.5 acres are in St. George, Georgia.[255]

- Lower Muskogee Creek Tribe – The Tribe's mission is to provide members and communities with an advanced service system of health care, education, housing and other needs to enhance a better standard of living, while preserving traditions, culture, and heritage of the Lower Muskogee people It has a membership of approximately 2,800 members and is in Whigham in southwest Georgia.[256]

5.1.1.6 Scientific survey

- **Purpose:** Conduct various surveys targeting Georgia residents.

- **Goal:** Capture data related to digital connectivity plan KPIs, gaps, and impact.

- **Potential partners:** Universities and research institutions, state agencies.

- **Potential outcomes:** Refined strategies based on direct community feedback.

5.1.1.7 Stakeholder organization engagements

- **Purpose:** Engage stakeholders from various sectors.

- **Goal:** Understand sector-specific challenges in promoting digital connectivity.

- **Potential partners:** Workforce development organizations, ISPs, and community-based organizations representing covered populations.

- **Potential outcomes:** A plan that acknowledges and addresses sectoral constraints and opportunities.

With each engagement, our specific aim is to glean insights about the unique needs of covered populations. By partnering with the right stakeholders, we aspire to address the diverse needs of covered populations comprehensively and effectively.

5.1.1.8 Statewide digital connectivity advisory committee

The Digital Connectivity Advisory Committee (DCAC) plays an instrumental role in fortifying Georgia's commitment to promoting digital equity and inclusion. Established in February 2023, the DCAC was instituted to pinpoint Georgia's needs and gaps, enhancing the State's approach to digital connectivity planning and capacity building.

Composition and purpose: The 30 members of the DCAC align with the guidelines set forth by NTIA. The members have proximity to the "covered populations" and are deeply familiar with

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[255] Cherokee of Georgia Tribal Council, Georgia Council on American Indian Concerns, https://georgiaindiancouncil.com/georgia_tribes/cherokee_of_georgia_tribal_council.
[256] Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe, Georgia Council on American Indian Concerns, https://georgiaindiancouncil.com/georgia_tribes/lower_muskogee_creek_tribe.

the unique challenges and requirements of the communities they represent. The DCAC convenes every month and has made significant contributions to this Plan in the following ways:

Drafting the vision and objectives: Members actively helped formulate the digital connectivity plan's foundational vision and objectives. Drawing from their extensive experience and insights, they ensured that the plan is both aspirational and grounded in the needs of Georgia's diverse communities.

Supporting outreach during listening sessions: The DCAC played a pivotal role during the spring and summer listening sessions. Members provided valuable feedback and facilitated open communication channels with various community groups, ensuring that diverse voices were represented and heard.

Event participation and collaboration: Several DCAC members extended invitations to the State's broadband team to be part of their events, such as meeting with the Atlanta Black Chamber of Commerce, GA Municipal Associations Broadband Summit, and over 4,000 AARP members on a Tele-Townhall. This facilitated a symbiotic exchange of ideas and showcased the State's commitment to enhancing digital connectivity at grassroots levels.

Making key connections: Recognizing the importance of broad-based support, the DCAC introduced the digital connectivity team to influential stakeholders within their networks. This helped amplify the State's message and fostered collaborations that will be instrumental in the Plan's success.

In their commitment to enhancing digital connectivity in Georgia, the DCAC has proven to be an invaluable partner—translating their expertise into actionable strategies and fostering community engagement at every step.

Engaging the Committee for Implementation

The State envisions a dynamic collaboration with the entire DCAC and its individual organizations to realize the digital connectivity objectives. A pivotal strategy in this direction will be crafting a holistic digital skills framework with inter-agency partners. The framework will serve as a guidepost for educational institutions and training centers and address skillsets from basic to advanced.

Leveraging the Committee's Diverse Expertise: The broad representation within the DCAC—spanning from academic institutions to civil rights organizations and ISPs to faith-based entities—offers a multitude of avenues for collaboration and outreach. Educational entities can shape curriculum and drive digital literacy initiatives, while community groups enhance our grassroots

connectivity efforts. Private companies can offer technology capability and volunteers, and faith and civic entities extend our reach to less-accessible communities. Concurrently, state agencies ensure our alignment with statewide objectives, and specialized groups bring distinct community trust and outreach to the table.

Strategic Coordination Approach: A structured and collaborative coordination mechanism is vital to realizing our vision of comprehensive digital connectivity. The diversity within the DCAC ensures a multi-faceted approach to planning and implementation. Through regular meetings, feedback loops, and transparent communication channels, we aim to maximize the potential of each member organization and ensure our efforts are synergistic and effective.

Expanding the Committee with Interagency Partners: As our initiatives in digital connectivity evolve, so must the DCAC. Expanding the committee to include additional interagency partners is a strategic step toward ensuring that our strategies remain comprehensive and in line with the broad spectrum of Georgia's resources. These interagency collaborations will help address specific challenges, identify opportunities, and ensure that our efforts remain synchronized with the larger statewide objectives. Each agency will bring unique insights, resources, and expertise, further enhancing the depth and breadth of the committee.

Leveraging Existing Members for Consortium Development: Creating a statewide consortium for digital connectivity is a massive undertaking that requires everyone's help. Our current DCAC members are vital to this effort. By strategically utilizing their strengths, networks, and expertise, we can establish a strong foundation for the consortium.

5.1.2   Key challenge 1: Lack of broadband availability

The following proposed strategies and associated core activities and measurable objectives are designed to address the barriers for covered populations identified in Table 12 related to broadband availability.

5.1.2.1 Activities for Strategy 1.1: Increase access to residential broadband infrastructure

Objective 1.A: Achieve statewide broadband access			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
Execute BEAD Program Extend last-mile broadband infrastructure to expand broadband access in unserved areas that are hub zones, federal opportunity zones, and communities	Promote economic growth and digital connectivity in regions that have historically been neglected or underfunded and providing more opportunities for education, employment,	• **Closes geographic access gaps** by extending broadband to unserved, often rural or low-income areas. • **Reduces economic barriers** by making broadband more affordable in low-income communities. • **Boosts economic development** in	2023 to 2030 (consistent with IIJA BEAD requirements), evaluated biennially against broadband availability measurable

Objective 1.A: Achieve statewide broadband access			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
densely populated with **low-income individuals**.	healthcare, and other crucial services increasingly reliant on dependable internet access.	hub zones and federal opportunity zones through better broadband access.	objective goals for access in Section 2.3.2.1.

5.1.2.2 Activities for Strategy 1.2: Expand collaborative efforts as broadband progresses

Objective 1.B: Increase broadband subscription statewide through a holistic awareness campaign			
Objective 1.C: Spur a significant increase in broadband subscription for Georgians living in counties with highest digital inequities			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
Require grantee low-cost offerings Build requirements and enhanced scoring for affordable service offerings into all broadband infrastructure grant programs.	Promote the availability of low-cost internet options as a fundamental aspect of digital connectivity for **all covered populations**.	• **Reduces economic barriers** for households by integrating affordable services as a standard in broadband expansion. • **Enhances sustainability and long-term impact** by embedding affordable service requirements in grant programs, promoting lasting digital connectivity.	2023 to 2025, with monitoring and enforcement thereafter, evaluated biennially against broadband affordability measurable objective goals for ISP low-cost products in Section 2.3.2.2.
Use public access channels and Georgia Broadcast Radio Services to disseminate information about digital connectivity initiatives Leverage existing public media networks, including public access channels and Georgia Broadcast Radio Services, to broadcast timely and relevant information about broadband expansion projects, digital literacy initiatives, and available resources for the community.	Leverage public media's broad reach, credibility, and tailored content to disseminate information and engage **all covered populations** in digital connectivity initiatives, enabling two-way communication for feedback and improvement.	• **Expands awareness** about broadband expansion and digital literacy initiatives to a broader audience. • **Alleviates information disparities** by reaching populations who may not have access to digital sources of information. • **Mitigates the digital divide** by providing essential information through accessible and trusted media platforms. • **Enhances community knowledge** about available resources and support for digital connectivity. • **Eases access to information** in communities that might otherwise be unaware of ongoing digital initiatives.	2025 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against broadband availability measurable objective goals for adoption in Section 2.3.2.1.
Utilize innovative outreach	Reach **all covered**	• **Expands accessibility** to digital	2023 and thereafter,

Objective 1.B: Increase broadband subscription statewide through a holistic awareness campaign

Objective 1.C: Spur a significant increase in broadband subscription for Georgians living in counties with highest digital inequities

Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps Addressed	Timeline
solutions for covered populations that are difficult to reach Expand community engagement for unconnected communities to engage with constituents using mobile, telecom and virtual platforms, enabling multi-lingual public outreach and communication.	**populations, particularly English learners, ethnic and racial minorities, and rural residents** in underserved and unserved communities and provide flexible and adaptable multilingual outreach over a range of platforms.	information and resources for unconnected communities, using varied and innovative methods. • **Facilitates multi-lingual outreach**, ensuring that language barriers do not impede access to digital resources and information. • **Increases engagement** for covered populations, using platforms they are more likely to access or trust.	evaluated biennially against broadband availability measurable objective goals for adoption in Section 2.3.2.1.

5.1.3 Key challenge 2: Low-income households struggle to afford broadband services, devices, and technical support

The following proposed strategies and associated core activities and measurable objectives are designed to address the barriers for covered populations identified in Table 12 related to broadband affordability and device access.

5.1.3.1 Activities for Strategy 2.1: Partner with ISPs and community stakeholders for improved broadband affordability and device accessibility

Objective 2.A: Boost ACP enrollment

Objective 2.B: Increase the percentage of ISPs with low-cost broadband service offerings

Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps Addressed	Timeline
Develop educational materials Provide content and support for educational campaigns among organizations that focus on ACP and low-cost internet service offerings as well as for localities, CAIs, and nonprofits that have not previously worked to extend ACP and ISP-offered discount program enrollment.	Provide tailored content and support to organizations and localities focused on low-cost broadband services like the ACP, particularly aiding entities new to implementing these initiatives. This strategy is designed to effectively reach **all covered populations,** with a special emphasis **on low-income individuals** and **English learners**, ensuring they have the necessary information and assistance	• **Alleviates the lack of awareness** about ACP and low-cost ISP programs among low-income households. • **Facilitates access to resources** for organizations and nonprofits to promote digital connectivity programs. • **Enhances the capacity** of local entities and nonprofits to effectively engage in digital equity program promotion.	Ongoing (initiated in 2022), evaluated biennially against broadband affordability measurable objective goals for ACP enrollment in Section 2.3.2.2.

Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps Addressed	Timeline
	to access these subsidies. If the ACP program is not refunded, we will explore alternative options to ensure our efforts to support low-cost ISP programs continue. We will develop a contingency plan and advocate for affordable connectivity for all with stakeholders.		
Encourage ISP partnerships for ACP enrollment drives Encourage ISPs to partner with localities, CAIs, and nonprofits to develop ACP and low-cost ISP program enrollment drives and initiatives.	Foster collaboration between stakeholders to enhance the reach and impact of these initiatives in unserved and underserved communities where **covered populations** reside.	• **Lessens economic barriers** to internet access by encouraging ISPs to offer more affordable options and support enrollment in subsidy programs. • **Alleviates the information gap** by spreading knowledge about ACP and low-cost ISP programs through trusted local organizations. • **Reduces the complexity** of enrollment in affordable internet programs, making them more accessible to a broader range of individuals.	2023 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against broadband affordability measurable objective goals for ACP enrollment and ISP low-cost products in Section 2.3.2.2.
Fund library- and other CAI-based ACP enrollment drives Provide funding for libraries and other CAIs that offer ACP/low-cost program enrollment drives for eligible households.	Provide funding to organizations that serve as trusted, central hubs in communities and that already have the infrastructure and experience in providing public services, including community outreach making them ideal for reaching **covered populations, particularly low-income individuals and youth, seniors, and individuals with language barriers,** who utilize them as the primary resource to access to information and the internet.	• **Allocates resources** to libraries and CAIs for ACP enrollment drives. • **Facilitates informed participation** in ACP and low-cost programs by providing hands-on assistance and information. • **Enhances community engagement and accessibility** in affordable internet programs. • **Offers support for English learners** via libraries and CAIs, acknowledged as trusted sources, to effectively communicate and promote the understanding and adoption of affordable internet programs.	2024 to 2029, based on availability of Digital Equity Capacity Grant, evaluated biennially against broadband affordability measurable objective goals for ACP enrollment in Section 2.3.2.2.

Objective 2.A: Boost ACP enrollment			
Objective 2.B: Increase the percentage of ISPs with low-cost broadband service offerings			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
Encourage ISP low-cost offerings Work with ISPs throughout the state to encourage adoption and expansion of low-cost offerings for **lower-income households**.	Improve **lower-income households'** access to affordable internet.	• **Alleviates the disparity in internet accessibility,** especially in communities where standard broadband costs are prohibitively high. • **Expands service availability** in services in areas ISPs might typically overlook due to lower profitability, widening the reach of internet access.	Ongoing (initiated in 2020), evaluated biennially against BEAD goals and broadband affordability measurable objective goals for ISP low-cost products in Section 2.3.2.2.

5.1.3.2 Activities for Strategy 2.2: Establish a device ecosystem

Objective 2.C: Enhance device access for all covered populations through a sustainable device ecosystem			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
Develop an ecosystem for devices Create an ecosystem where new and used devices (e.g., laptops, tablets, desktops) can be collected, refurbished, and distributed. This involves partnerships with manufacturers, retailers, private and public industry, and device refurbishers to make the device lifecycle sustainable and accessible for **all covered populations**.	Facilitate accessibility for **all covered populations** while promoting environmental sustainability and reducing costs.	• **Alleviates economic barriers** that reduce the cost burden on community members, particularly those in low-income households, by providing affordable access to new and used devices. • **Establishes a sustainable supply of computers**, access, training, and support • **Mitigates the environmental impact** of electronic waste through sustainable practices, such as refurbishing and recycling devices.	2025 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for access to devices in Section 2.3.2.2.
Provide technical support for device maintenance Establish a dedicated helpline and online support center manned by tech volunteers and professionals. This will serve the double purpose of job training and providing essential support to new device owners to ensure the	Provide technical assistance to **all covered populations** who may not have enough financial resources to replace their devices frequently while also empowering them with the knowledge and skills to independently resolve device-related problems and reduce their	• **Alleviates the language barrier** by providing multilingual support to English learners who own devices. • **Lowers the knowledge gap** by providing device maintenance training to tech volunteers and professionals, which will help them provide effective technical support to new device owners. • **Eases the financial burden** reducing the need for frequent replacements	2026 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for access to devices in Section 2.3.2.2.

Objective 2.C: Enhance device access for all covered populations through a sustainable device ecosystem			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
longevity of their devices. Include multilingual support to serve **English learners**.	dependence on costly professional support services. Additionally, this activity leverages community expertise to create a self-sustaining support network.	and repairs.	
Develop a toolkit for residents and nonprofits for accessing internet-related resources Provide guidance regarding best practices, expertise, and partnership opportunities to localities and nonprofits to develop and expand existing programs that provide free devices to lower-income households.	Facilitate accessibility for **all covered populations** to best practices and access to resources.	• **Facilitates access to resources.** • **Builds capacity** of members of covered populations and organizations that serve covered populations.	2024 to -2026, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills in Section 2.3.2.2.

5.1.3.3 Activities for Strategy 2.3: Expand device ownership initiatives

Objective 2.C: Enhance device access for all covered populations through a sustainable device ecosystem Objective 2.D: Georgians in need can access affordable device options through digital connectivity organizations			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
Fund device repurposing and redistribution initiatives Encourage the community to donate used but functional devices. These devices will be collected, refurbished, and then distributed to **covered populations** through community partners and local government entities.	Maximize the impact of existing technological resources by leveraging them for sustainable device redistribution to ensure they do not go to waste but instead provide essential digital access to covered populations.	• **Diminishes device unavailability** for covered populations by refurbishing and redistributing used technology. • **Alleviates the burden of device costs** for low-income households by providing them with necessary technology**.** • **Reduces the digital ownership gap by** increasing the number of households with access to personal computing devices.	2025 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for access to devices in Section 2.3.2.2.
Launch a comprehensive device ownership program through public-private partnerships. Encourage partnerships between local organizations, municipalities, and private	Facilitate access to digital devices for **covered populations** by establishing a program that combines device sponsorship from technology companies and local businesses with a subsidy scheme supported	• **Reduces the cost barrier** for device ownership among low-income families and individuals. • **Eases the challenge of device acquisition** for seniors and people with disabilities, who often face financial and physical constraints. • **Lessens the disparity in personal**	2025 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for access to devices in Section 2.3.2.2.

Objective 2.C: Enhance device access for all covered populations through a sustainable device ecosystem
Objective 2.D: Georgians in need can access affordable device options through digital connectivity organizations

Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps Addressed	Timeline
companies, including technology firms, to enhance device access for **covered populations.** These collaborations will lead to private companies donating new or refurbished devices for distribution, as well as providing financial assistance to help cover the cost of devices for covered populations.	by public-private partnerships. This integrated approach aims to provide both direct device distribution and financial assistance for purchasing devices.	**device access**, crucial for accessing online education, telehealth services, and remote work opportunities.	
Provide device access to the incarcerated population, formerly incarcerated, and other justice-impacted individuals In collaboration with the Georgia Department of Corrections, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Public Safety, and related entities, provide secure internet-enabled devices to **incarcerated individuals** and other individuals impacted by the justice system. These devices will support educational modules, facilitate virtual mental health appointments, and enable access to resources for effective societal reintegration. This targeted approach prioritizes education, healthcare, and resource accessibility, utilizing technology to meet essential objectives efficiently.	Provide **incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, and other justice-impacted individuals** with digital tools to enhance their education, support mental health, and facilitate reintegration into society, recognizing that access to technology is a crucial element in modern rehabilitation and reentry processes. Digital tools can help increase employability which reduces recidivism rates.	• **Alleviates the technology accessibility gap** for incarcerated, formerly incarcerated and other justice impacted individuals, providing them with technology to learn, use telehealth, and access resources for self-sufficiency. • **Enhances opportunities for education and mental health support**, using technology to bridge service gaps in correctional facilities. • **Facilitates effective societal reintegration**, by enabling access to resources that prepare individuals for life after release.	2025 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for access to devices in Section 2.3.2.2.

5.1.3.4 Activities for Strategy 2.4: Leverage CAIs to expand community-level device access

Objective 2.E: Increase device loaner programs and public computer labs through Community Anchor Institutions serving covered populations			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
Fund library-based technical support Provide funding for libraries to offer technical support for library users. This support could involve: • Dedicated tech support staff or volunteers • One-on-one device assistance • Remote support through phone, email, or chat services for basic tech questions.	Provide accessible, hands-on technical assistance to library users including **low-income individuals, seniors, people with disabilities, and racial and ethnic minorities, English learners, and individuals with low literacy**, thereby enhancing their digital skills and confidence in using technology. This support ensures their computers and devices are functioning properly, enhancing their ongoing digital engagement.	• **Alleviates the digital literacy gap**, providing personalized assistance to users for various tech-related issues. • **Reduces the access barrier to technical support**, especially for those in communities with limited resources or expertise in technology. • **Diminishes the knowledge disparity** for seniors and other covered populations, offering tailored guidance and remote support to help users navigate and utilize digital tools and resources.	2024 to 2029, based on availability of Digital Equity Capacity Grant, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for access to devices in Section 2.3.2.2.
Establish partnership to create a device lending program, where CAIs act as key distribution points. Coordinate with technology providers, local organizations, and private sector entities to source and supply devices, enabling a steady and reliable flow of technology for community use. CAIs function as accessible hubs for distributing loaner devices, enabling community members to have temporary access to essential technology.	Provide widespread, cost-effective access to technology that fosters digital literacy and meets the needs of **covered populations**, regardless of personal device ownership.	• **Alleviates the device access gap**, especially for individuals who cannot afford personal technology. • **Reduces the digital literacy divide**, by offering hands-on experience with technology to those lacking access at home. • **Reduces the economic barriers** to digital access, ensuring technology is reachable for all income levels.	2025 to 2029, based on availability of Digital Equity Capacity Grant, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for access to devices in Section 2.3.2.2.
Support device access and technical support for aging individuals In partnership with CAIs such as senior centers and libraries, make internet-enabled devices available to **aging individuals**, including those with disabilities. These hubs will also	Provide internet-enabled devices and support services to **aging individuals** and their caregivers to enable digital independence and self-sufficiency through the distribution.	• **Alleviates the technology accessibility gap** to ensure they have the tools to connect digitally. • **Lessens the isolation barrier** by providing devices and skills needed to stay connected with the broader community. • **Eases the access challenges** to essential online services, such as telehealth and digital government	2024 an thereafter, based on availability of Digital Equity Capacity Grant, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for access to devices in Section 2.3.2.2.

Objective 2.E: Increase device loaner programs and public computer labs through Community Anchor Institutions serving covered populations			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
offer digital literacy training, enabling members of covered populations to navigate telehealth services, stay socially connected, and access essential online resources.		resources, for older adults and individuals with disabilities.	

5.1.3.5 Activities for Strategy 2.5: Prioritize and prepare for broadband and digital connectivity in counties with highest digital inequities

Objective 2.B: Increase the percentage of ISPs with low-cost broadband service offerings			
Objective 2.D: Georgians in need can access affordable device options through digital connectivity organizations			
Objective 2.E: Increase device loaner programs and public computer labs through Anchor Institutions serving covered populations			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
Develop a weighted scoring model to analyze and identify areas of intersection of multiple factors A weighted scoring model will help to pinpoint areas where layered socioeconomic challenges amplify the digital divide.	Identify the intersections of compounded socioeconomic challenges, such as the absence of broadband access, that particularly affect **low-income households, ethnic and racial minorities, rural residents, and state recognized tribes** which further exacerbate the digital divide. By understanding this intersectionality, we can customize our digital connectivity programs to specifically address the multifaceted needs of these communities.	• **Identifies geographical areas with compounded digital inequities**, allowing for targeted interventions. • **Improves social determinants of health** by identifying and addressing the unique needs of the covered populations. • **Enhances the effectiveness of digital connectivity initiatives** by ensuring resources are directed to areas with the greatest need and potential impact.	October 2024 to 2026, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for broadband affordability and access in Section 2.3.2.2.
Develop comprehensive digital connectivity ecosystem Unify state agencies, regional planning commissions, local governments, nonprofits, and the private sector to form a network that enhances digital connectivity across Georgia.	Develop an integrated network for stakeholders working collaboratively on services and policies; this initiative aims to identify human, physical, and technological resources and take actionable steps towards reducing digital	• **Creates a synergistic network** that elevates the standard of digital connectivity throughout Georgia. • **Fosters collaboration** between diverse organizations and sectors, streamlining efforts and resources for more efficient and widespread digital connectivity program development.	2025 -2029, based on availability of Digital Equity Capacity Grant, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for collaboration and capacity building in

Objective 2.B: Increase the percentage of ISPs with low-cost broadband service offerings
Objective 2.D: Georgians in need can access affordable device options through digital connectivity organizations
Objective 2.E: Increase device loaner programs and public computer labs through Anchor Institutions serving covered populations

Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps Addressed	Timeline
	connectivity barriers for **all covered populations,** particularly in counties with highest digital inequities. See Appendix C: County digital connectivity data.	• **Enhances the capacity for comprehensive planning and implementation**, leveraging the unique strengths and resources of each sector. • **Strengthens statewide initiatives** by pooling expertise, technology, and funding from various sources, ensuring a more cohesive and impactful approach to digital connectivity.	Section 2.3.2.5.

5.1.4 Key challenge 3: Covered populations need support to develop digital skills, including skills to protect themselves and their personal data online

The following proposed strategies and associated core activities and measurable objectives are designed to address the barriers for covered populations identified in Table 12 related to digital skills and online security.

5.1.4.1 Activities for Strategy 3.1: Develop a foundational digital skills framework for all Georgians

Objective 3.A: Design and develop a statewide digital skills framework

Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps Addressed	Timeline
Create a digital skills framework and guidebook with digital competency benchmarks. Develop a comprehensive framework and guidebook outlining standardized digital competency benchmarks, providing a practical reference for educational institutions, training centers, and individuals for digital skill assessment and development.	Establish well-defined digital competency benchmarks that can serve as a standard point of reference for educational institutions, training centers, and individuals. Such benchmarks would aim to ensure that digital skill education is consistent, accurate, and of high quality while considering the specific needs and requirements of different industries and job functions. It will also be regularly updated to reflect the latest trends and	• **Overcomes the challenge of resource allocation** by offering a practical framework for tailored digital skills resources, enabling institutions and centers to provide targeted learning support efficiently. • **Alleviates inconsistencies** in digital skills assessments and training for organizations serving the covered populations. **Aids in meeting workforce training needs** by outlining a structured training pathway. • **Responds to the need for real-time, relevant digital skills content**	2024 to 2029, based on availability of Digital Equity Capacity Grant, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills in Section 2.3.2.3.

Objective 3.A: Design and develop a statewide digital skills framework

Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps Addressed	Timeline
	technologies in the digital landscape. This will support the development of these skills for **all members of covered populations** who seek training to improve their digital skills.	improving trainers' and educators' access to the latest information and practices in the ever-evolving digital landscape.	
Integrate digital financial literacy into the statewide digital skills framework Integrate digital financial literacy into the digital skills framework to address the growing importance of online financial management. Through partnerships with financial institutions and content experts, this initiative aims to ensure that all Georgians are equipped to manage their personal finances safely and effectively in a digital environment.	Provide guidance for digital financial literacy within the context of digital skills education. By integrating digital financial literacy into the broader digital skills framework, **covered populations, particularly aging individuals and ethnic and racial minorities** and the organizations who serve them, can access resources and guidance to protect themselves from digital financial risks.	• **Equips covered populations with the digital skills needed to manage their finances** safely and effectively in the digital environment. • **Enhances digital skills training** by seamlessly integrating essential financial education. This bridges the gap between digital skills and financial literacy, recognizing the fundamental importance of these combined skills in navigating the digital financial landscape, especially for covered populations.	2024 to 2029, based on availability of Digital Equity Capacity Grant, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills in Section 2.3.2.3.
Standardize cybersecurity and privacy guidelines in the digital skills framework Integrate a cybersecurity and privacy section into the digital skills framework, covering topics such as strong passwords, phishing scams, and secure browsing.	Provide guidance within the digital skills framework to ensure that **covered populations, particularly aging individuals and low-income individuals**, along with the organizations that support them, have access to comprehensive resources and guidance for safeguarding their security and safety online.	• **Equips the covered populations with the digital skills to protect themselves** effectively in the digital environment. • **Enhances digital skills training** by seamlessly integrating essential cyber safety education. This bridges the gap between digital skills and cybersecurity, recognizing the fundamental importance of these combined skills in interacting with technology, especially for covered populations.	2024 to 2029, based on availability of Digital Equity Capacity Grant, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills in Section 2.3.2.3.
Integrate digital civic engagement within the digital skills framework Introduce digital civic engagement principles into the digital skills framework, highlighting its role in informed community participation. Utilize adaptable resources and case	Provide guidance within the digital skills framework to ensure that **all covered populations**, along with the organizations that support them, have access to comprehensive resources and guidance for digital civic engagement.	• **Equips the covered populations digital skills** to effectively navigate government websites. • **Enhances digital skills training** by seamlessly integrating information literacy and media literacy. This bridges the gap between digital skills and civic engagement recognizing the fundamental importance of these combined skills in navigating online and fostering	2024 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills in Section 2.3.2.3.

Objective 3.A: Design and develop a statewide digital skills framework

Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps Addressed	Timeline
studies to underscore the real-world impact of digital civic involvement, ensuring diverse populations understand and harness the power of inclusive digital citizenship.		informed and responsible digital citizens.	
Integrate artificial intelligence (AI) literacy into the digital skills framework Introduce AI literacy into the digital skills framework to support the fundamental understanding of AI and its applications as it is increasingly integrated into our day-to-day experiences.	Provide guidance within the digital skills framework to ensure that **all covered populations**, along with the organizations that support them, are equipped to navigate and effectively use AI technologies. To achieve this, GTA will collaborate with educational institutions across the state. The focus is on enabling individuals to critically evaluate AI technologies, communicate and collaborate effectively with AI, and use AI as a practical tool online, at home, and in the workplace if they so choose.	• **Equips the covered populations digital skills** to effectively understand and utilize AI technologies. • **Enhances digital skills training** by seamlessly integrating information literacy and media literacy. This bridges the gap between digital skills and civic engagement recognizing the fundamental importance of these combined skills in understanding AI concepts, ethics, and applications.	2025 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills in Section 2.3.2.3.

5.1.4.2 Activities for Strategy 3.2: Empower covered populations with digital healthcare skills

Objective 3.F: Enhance digital health literacy in covered populations

Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps Addressed	Timeline
Expand regional telehealth capacity and accessibility This multi-stakeholder initiative aims to enhance the accessibility and efficacy of telehealth services in areas with limited healthcare access by pooling expertise from a variety of organizations, university health organizations, health-focused nonprofits, and state agencies.	Support areas and communities with limited healthcare access, focusing on all covered populations, particularly **low-income, rural, and aging populations.** This initiative addresses the unique healthcare needs of these communities through digital solutions, playing a crucial role in ensuring equitable	• **Enhances telehealth service efficacy** by pooling expertise from diverse organizations thus improving the quality of healthcare delivery. • **Provides critical support to communities with limited healthcare access** by facilitating access to medical care that might otherwise be unavailable, thereby playing a key role in promoting healthcare equity. • **Bridges gaps in medical services**	2025 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills in Section 2.3.2.3.

Objective 3.F: Enhance digital health literacy in covered populations

Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps Addressed	Timeline
	healthcare access.	**and information** by leveraging telehealth as a tool thus expanding healthcare reach and availability. • **Supports medical organizations that serve covered populations** by expanding their reach and capacity to efficiently serve a wider patient base, thus enhancing their operational effectiveness and ability to meet diverse healthcare needs.	
Develop specialized digital healthcare skills Launch specialized digital literacy workshops that includes training on healthcare skills for using electronic health records, patient portals, mobile apps, and telehealth platforms.	Equip **all covered populations** with the necessary knowledge and capabilities for secure and effective use of digital healthcare tools, ensuring the confidentiality and integrity of health information. Through partnerships with government agencies, health-based non-profits, and healthcare providers, This collaborative approach helps to enhance the quality and safety of digital healthcare interactions.	• **Bolsters digital skills development in healthcare contexts** by familiarizing both medical staff and patients with health technologies, thereby enhancing the overall proficiency and confidence with digital tools in the healthcare sector. • **Alleviates accessibility challenges** faced by aging individuals, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with language barriers in accessing and utilizing digital health platforms, making these essential services user-friendly. • **Enhances understanding of data privacy** by supporting the understanding and implementation of data privacy and security practices in digital health, thereby reducing the potential for misuse of sensitive health information.	2026 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills in Section 2.3.2.3.
Enable Mobile Health Units to support digital skills and access. Deploy mobile units equipped with internet access, digital devices, and necessary resources. The units will visit community centers, rural areas, and other locations where covered populations reside. Staffed with trained personnel, the units will offer tailored support to build the digital skills required for managing healthcare needs effectively, ensuring these communities have	Directly address the digital divide experienced by **covered populations, particularly low-income, and rural residents**. This activity brings essential digital health resources and support directly into communities, enabling community members to build the digital skills necessary for effective healthcare management. This approach is crucial in bridging the gap in	• **Mitigates accessibility challenges** providing direct access to digital health resources in their own communities. • **Enhances digital literacy** among covered populations by offering hands-on training and support. • **Improves continuity of care** for covered populations by ensuring consistent access to digital health resources, enabling ongoing and uninterrupted management of their health needs.	2026 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills in Section 2.3.2.3.

Objective 3.F: Enhance digital health literacy in covered populations			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
equitable access to digital health resources.	healthcare access and digital literacy for these underserved groups.		
Support tech-enabled health literacy partnerships Collaborate with educational and healthcare stakeholders to amplify health literacy, especially on preventative care, chronic disease management, nutrition, heart disease, and diabetes. Harness technology through webinars, kiosk info-stations, mobile health units, tailored apps, interactive websites, and virtual workshops.	Improve health literacy across **all covered populations, particularly low-income, ethnic and racial minorities, veterans, and aging individuals** to make critical information accessible and empower individuals with the knowledge and resources needed to make informed health decisions.	• **Enhances access to critical health information** for all covered populations, utilizing technology to reach a broader audience and provide resources on key health topics. • **Improves engagement with health resources and** programs making learning about health more appealing and effective. • **Amplifies understanding and implementation of preventative care** strategies among all covered populations by providing accessible, tech-enabled resources and guidance, helping individuals to proactively manage their health and wellness.	2026 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills in Section 2.3.2.3.

5.1.4.3 Activities for Strategy 3.3: Foster online safety and privacy awareness within digital literacy

Objective 3.E: Covered populations in Georgia can access information or training to learn how to protect their security and privacy online.			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
Fund community-based security and privacy training Provide funding for community organizations to offer training regarding online safety and privacy.	Provide funding to ensure that organizations that support **covered populations, particularly aging individuals and low-income individuals**, have access to comprehensive resources and guidance for safeguarding their security and safety online.	• **Strengthens community-based digital safety initiatives** by allocating resources to programs to deliver online safety and privacy training, ensuring grassroots solutions that are tailored to the unique needs and challenges of each covered population. • **Equips covered populations with the digital skills to protect themselves** effectively in the digital environment. • **Alleviates safety risks** associated with online activity, particularly for populations who may be	2025 to 2029, based on availability of Digital Equity Capacity Grant, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills in Section 2.3.2.3.

Objective 3.E: Covered populations in Georgia can access information or training to learn how to protect their security and privacy online.			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
		more vulnerable to online threats and misinformation.	
Run a campaign to raise awareness about the importance of cybersecurity and online privacy Initiate a public awareness campaign using a mix of engaging and accessible materials and outreach channels that promotes safe and informed digital engagement by highlighting important aspects of cybersecurity and online privacy.	Develop educational materials and leverage digital media platforms effectively to broaden our outreach, aiming to significantly enhance cybersecurity and online privacy awareness among **all covered populations.**	• **Eradicates information gaps in cybersecurity** by providing all covered populations with the essential information needed to navigate the digital world safely. • **Alleviates vulnerabilities to online threats** that often lead to data breaches and digital exploitation, particularly for those who are less familiar with the nuances of digital security. • **Enhances overall digital wellness** of the community, contributing to a more secure and informed digital environment for everyone.	2024 to 2029, based on availability of Digital Equity Capacity Grant, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills and online security in Section 2.3.2.3.
Utilize statewide cybersecurity resources for integrated digital skills training Use Georgia's position as a cybersecurity hub to foster a workforce that is prepared for cyber threats. By partnering with cybersecurity companies, educational institutions with National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity (NCAE-C) designations, and military cyber units like the Army Cyber Command at Fort Eisenhower, GTA can provide integrated digital skills training. This will not only improve safety online for those we serve but also help grow Georgia's $2.6 billion cybersecurity sector by developing a highly skilled workforce.	Harness Georgia's position as a cybersecurity hub to empower the covered populations particularly **veterans, low-income individuals seeking upward economic mobility, and ethnic and racial minorities**, with cybersecurity skills and create pathways for them to access high-level career opportunities in the cybersecurity sector, a field that offers substantial economic potential and job security. By partnering with renowned cybersecurity firms, academic institutions recognized for cybersecurity excellence, and military cyber units, GTA aims to provide comprehensive, advanced training that goes beyond basic cyber safety.	• **Advances technical proficiency in cybersecurity** by offering in-depth training and resources, ensuring that covered populations develop the advanced skills required for specialized roles in the cybersecurity field. • **Transforms economic prospects and fosters inclusivity in the cybersecurity sector** by tailoring training to specifically elevate career opportunities for covered populations in cybersecurity, thus creating a diverse and economically empowering cybersecurity landscape. • **Cultivates a skilled cyber-ready workforce** by integrating advanced cybersecurity education into workforce development programs, addressing the demand for highly trained professionals in this rapidly evolving sector.	2025 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills and online security in Section 2.3.2.3.

Objective 3.E: Covered populations in Georgia can access information or training to learn how to protect their security and privacy online.			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
Support safe internet practices to combat human trafficking Provide guidance surrounding online safety, particularly in the context of human trafficking, highlighting the ways traffickers exploit the internet and social media platforms. This activity will provide practical guidelines to bolster privacy and safety in online spaces. It teaches participants how to recognize warning signs and understand the digital tactics employed by traffickers.	Collaborate with the GRACE Commission to reinforce Georgia's efforts in combatting human trafficking, focusing particularly on the **covered population including women and girls, ethnic and racial minorities, and English learners** who are particularly at-risk. This partnership will address the complexities of online safety, offering crucial data to illustrate the extent of trafficking within the state, with a specific emphasis on technology's role in facilitating these exploitative practices.	• **Mitigates the risk of online exploitation for covered populations** by providing targeted education and resources that help covered populations understand and navigate the complex landscape of the internet, reducing their susceptibility to the tactics used by traffickers. • **Supports the integration of online safety training by** providing guidance and expertise on how to incorporate online safety training into broader efforts to combat human trafficking. • **Forges collaborative partnerships with community organizations** to help identify and engage with covered populations more effectively, ensuring that resources and education on human trafficking and online safety reach those who need it the most. • **Overcomes language and cultural barriers in digital safety education** to ensure that English learners and various ethnic and racial groups receive information in a manner that is both accessible and relevant to their specific needs and experiences.	2024 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills and online security in Section 2.3.2.3.

5.1.4.4 Activities for Strategy 3.4: Empower community organizations for comprehensive digital literacy

Objective 3.B: Expand digital literacy through community collaborations.			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
Fund community-based digital skills training Empower CAIs and local	Deepen the digital literacy foundation within the community by providing funding for comprehensive	• **Alleviates digital literacy deficiencies** by providing a variety of training programs and formats that cater to the specific	2025 to 2029, based on availability of Digital Equity Capacity Grant,

Objective 3.B: Expand digital literacy through community collaborations.			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
organizations by providing them with the necessary funding and support to develop and execute digital skills training programs. Using the grassroots expertise and extensive experience of these organizations, this training encompasses a wide range of digital skills used by covered populations in navigating everyday life. In addition to basic computer skills, trainings may include: • **Digital financial skills,** vital for managing online transactions and understanding the digital economy. • **Civic engagement skills**, such as information and media literacy, crucial for discerning the reliability of information and engaging responsibly in digital spaces. • **Professional digital communication skills,** essential for effective interaction in the modern workplace and beyond. • **AI literacy,** increasingly important as artificial intelligence becomes more prevalent in various sectors. • **Digital health skills,** empowering individuals to access, understand, and use online health information responsibly. • **Cybersecurity skills,** critical for protecting personal information and navigating online spaces safely.	training programs that are accessible to **all covered populations.** To achieve this, formats such as bootcamps, workshops, and hands-on learning sessions will be utilized, accommodating different learning preferences and needs. These programs will be available in-person, as well as through hybrid and virtual formats, ensuring accessibility and flexibility for all participants.	needs and skill levels of all covered populations. • **Diminishes the digital divide for rural residents** through targeted training initiatives, helping them gain access to digital resources and skills often more readily available in urban areas. • **Enhances employment opportunities for low-income individuals** by equipping them with advanced digital skills, opening new career paths and possibilities for economic advancement in the technology sector. • **Improves accessibility and inclusivity in digital education** for people with disabilities and English learners, ensuring that digital skills training is adaptable and accessible to all individuals, regardless of their physical abilities or language.	evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for broadband affordability and access in Section 2.3.2.3.
Establish collaborative digital literacy and technology certification programs with educational Institutions Partnering with HBCUs, minority-serving institutions, technical colleges, workforce nonprofits,	Enhance Georgia's workforce competitiveness and economic resilience by establishing partnerships and fostering practical skill development. The aim is to equip a broad range of residents, including K-12	• **Strengthens workforce skills and ongoing learning** by providing accessible digital literacy and technology certification programs, ensuring that individuals across all covered populations, including K-12 students and adults, are	2025 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills in Section 2.3.2.3.

Objective 3.B: Expand digital literacy through community collaborations.			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
and K-12 CTAE departments, this initiative aims to offer customized digital literacy and tech certification courses, along with wraparound services to support learners. This holistic approach not only leverages the strengths of diverse educational organizations but also ensures comprehensive support for students, enhancing their learning experience. The inclusion of wraparound services, such as career counseling, mentorship, and technical support, complements the digital training, making it more effective and tailored to the needs of Georgia's varied communities.	students and adult learners within **all covered populations**, with valuable digital competencies. This aligns with the goal of fostering self-reliance and economic advancement and preparing Georgia's workforce for the demands of the modern, technology-driven economy.	equipped with the necessary skills to compete and succeed in a technology-driven job market. • **Boosts economic self-sufficiency** through enhancing digital competencies, enabling individuals, particularly from underrepresented groups, to access better job opportunities and contribute positively to Georgia's economy. • **Provides comprehensive support for learners** by integrating wraparound services with digital literacy training, ensuring that learners receive not only technical education but also the necessary support to apply these skills effectively in their personal and professional lives.	
Develop a Digital Navigator volunteer corps Establish a volunteer network comprising tech-savvy individuals and professionals who can offer in-person or virtual support for digital literacy activities. This corps will assist local organizations in running workshops and troubleshooting sessions, particularly aimed at covered populations, to help them overcome unique and intersectional digital challenges.	Strengthen the digital proficiency of **all covered populations** by developing a Digital Navigator volunteer corps to deliver tailored support that addresses the specific digital needs and challenges of these communities, enhancing their ability to engage effectively and safely in the digital world.	• **Enhances individualized learning experiences** by providing one-on-one guidance from the Digital Navigator volunteer corps, catering to the unique learning styles and needs of each participant. • **Bridges the technology assistance gap** for individuals who may require more personalized support in understanding and utilizing digital tools and resources. • **Improves digital accessibility** by offering tailored assistance in multiple languages and formats, ensuring that individuals facing language barriers or other challenges receive the support they need.	2026 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills in Section 2.3.2.3.
Implement flexible learning spaces for inclusive access Utilizing wireless capabilities and remote learning tools, local learning spaces transform into flexible educational environments that promote digital literacy	Implement adaptable learning environments, situated directly in community settings that meet the needs of **covered populations**, including those who rely primarily on smartphones for	• **Accommodates diverse learning needs** by providing flexible learning spaces that adapt to various constraints faced by individuals, such as reliance on different types of devices or physical limitations. • **Enhances access to digital**	2027 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills in Section 2.3.2.3.

Objective 3.B: Expand digital literacy through community collaborations.

Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps Addressed	Timeline
initiatives in underserved communities. These spaces are strategically located in accessible community venues such as public libraries, community centers, schools, faith-based institutions, county/city owned properties, and local non-profit organizations, and are fully equipped with advanced technological infrastructure including high-speed Wi-Fi, interactive digital boards, and a variety of computing devices such as tablets and laptops. Additionally, these spaces integrate remote learning tools like video conferencing systems and online collaborative platforms, ensuring seamless virtual participation for those who are unable to be physically present. This combination of physical and digital resources in our flexible learning spaces creates an environment conducive to diverse learning experiences.	internet access, those with physical disabilities, and individuals limited by transportation barriers. By supporting their digital competencies, each member, from aging individuals to low-income households, can fully engage with and benefit from the digital skills and connectivity.	**resources** for those in remote or underserved areas, ensuring that geographical and infrastructural barriers do not impede the ability to gain digital literacy. • **Supports continuous learning and adaptability** in a rapidly changing digital landscape, offering resources that are accessible to everyone, including those who cannot attend traditional in-person classes. • **Fosters community engagement and collaboration** by establishing learning spaces that serve as hubs for interaction, support, and shared learning experiences, thereby strengthening the collective digital capabilities of communities across Georgia.	

5.1.4.5 Activities for Strategy 3.5: Enhance digital literacy through youth and adult education platforms

Objective 3.C: Increase digital skills program enrollment and proficiency among covered populations

Objective 3.D: Covered populations in Georgia can effectively use the internet if they so choose

Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps Addressed	Timeline
Leverage STEM and Computer Science as platforms for digital literacy enhancement Integrate STEM/STEAM and Computer Science (CS), guided by the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) for Computer Science, into in-school and out-of-school programs. By providing equipment, curriculum, and support, this will enhance digital	Introduce essential digital skills through engaging, real-world applications, such as coding, data analysis, and cybersecurity, making digital literacy relevant and accessible. Additionally, through collaborative projects and problem-solving activities in STEM and CS, we can foster critical thinking and digital	● **Builds confidence and competency in technology** through STEM/STEAM and CS education and exposure, motivates individuals to further enroll in digital skills programs for professional growth. ● **Enhances computational thinking and problem-solving skills** by providing learners with the tools to effectively navigate and contribute to technological	2025 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills in Section 2.3.2.3.

Objective 3.C: Increase digital skills program enrollment and proficiency among covered populations			
Objective 3.D: Covered populations in Georgia can effectively use the internet if they so choose			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
literacy skills, including computational thinking and digital citizenship, among youth and adults. Additionally, this initiative is designed to actively encourage and support increased enrollment and proficiency in digital skills programs among covered populations.	fluency, so that **covered populations, particularly youth and adults in low-income households** are users, creators, and innovators in the technological space.	landscape. ● **Expands access to quality digital literacy education** by providing opportunities to develop digital skills through collaborative projects and engaging, real-world applications. ● **Builds a foundation for future technological advancements** by preparing learners with skills and knowledge that positions them to engage with emerging technologies and digital trends.	
Leverage Georgia's thriving arts and media sectors to boost digital literacy across generations Partner with Georgia's thriving creative industries and Department of Economic Development to support programs that resonate with both youth and adults and boost digital literacy. For youth, the focus is on sparking interest in tech through digital arts, tapping into their native "digital language." For adults, it is about upskilling and reskilling with a creative twist, aligning with career opportunities in the $62.5 billion creative economy.	Harness the arts and media sectors as dynamic platforms to elevate digital literacy across different generations, targeting increasing enrollment and proficiency in digital skills programs among covered populations. The synergy of arts, media, and digital literacy not only makes learning more engaging and relevant but also ensures that **all members of covered populations**, can effectively use the internet and other digital tools at their discretion.	● **Bridges generational digital divides** by utilizing the arts and media sectors to engage both youth and adults in digital literacy, making technology more accessible and appealing across different age groups. ● **Stimulates youth interest in technology** through digital arts initiatives, leveraging their innate familiarity with digital platforms to foster deeper understanding and use of technology. ● **Expands internet adoption** by collaborating with creative industries, offering diverse and innovative pathways for all individuals to develop their digital skills. ● **Cultivates creative approaches to digital learning** by integrating arts and media into digital literacy programs, making the learning process more engaging and effective for a wider range of individuals.	2025 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills in Section 2.3.2.3.
Integrate digital skills curricula and assessments into existing job training and job placement services. These customized programs offer all-inclusive training that merges essential digital skills with	Enhance the employability and job readiness of **all covered populations**. By embedding these digital competencies into the fabric of job-related training programs, we aim to equip individuals, particularly	● **Mitigates barriers to employment** by integrating digital skills training with job preparation, specifically addressing the need for digital proficiency in today's job market among covered populations. ● **Alleviates the digital skills gap** by	2027 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for digital skills in Section 2.3.2.3.

Objective 3.C: Increase digital skills program enrollment and proficiency among covered populations			
Objective 3.D: Covered populations in Georgia can effectively use the internet if they so choose			
Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps Addressed	Timeline
conventional job preparation for covered populations. These programs aim to develop skills and actively encourage and facilitate the enrollment of covered populations.	those from **low-income households, veterans, racial and ethnic minorities, incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals, those with low literacy levels, and English learners** facing employment challenges, with the opportunity to develop and demonstrate the digital skills that are increasingly crucial for professional advancement and economic stability.	providing accessible training in digital literacy alongside job skills. • **Diminishes the disparity in digital access through comprehensive programs** that combine essential digital literacy with conventional job training.	

5.1.4.6 Activities for Strategy 3.6: Leverage digital connectivity to empower opportunities for workforce and economic advancement

Objective 3.G: Enhance workforce development and opportunities in telecommunications, technology, and broadband-related industries.			
Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps Addressed	Timeline
Support technology certification programs Establish partnerships with local employers, educational organizations, Georgia's private sector, MBEs, nonprofits, HBCUs, and educational institutions to establish technology certification programs. These programs aim to integrate newly trained community members into broadband infrastructure and tech initiatives by offering accessible certification opportunities to enhance their employability.	Enhance professional development for **covered populations** by supporting programs that validate essential skills, improve employability, and ensure competitiveness in a technology-driven job market. This initiative targets **low-income households, veterans, and racial and ethnic minorities** to upskill them in high-demand, emerging tech sectors.	• **Alleviates the skills gap** in emerging tech sectors by offering technology certification programs to low-income households, veterans, and racial and ethnic minorities, enhancing their ability to engage in high-demand tech jobs. • **Enhances employability** for underrepresented groups through partnerships providing specialized training that aligns with current job market demands.	2025 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals in Section 2.3.2.5 and workforce development in Section 2.3.2.3.
Establish workforce development programs that recruit and train individuals for	Establish tailored programs focused on enhancing the economic opportunities of	• **Accommodates the growing demand for broadband professionals** by proactively	2024 to 2030 (consistent with IIJA BEAD requirements),

Objective 3.G: Enhance workforce development and opportunities in telecommunications, technology, and broadband-related industries.

Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps Addressed	Timeline
broadband-related occupations Coordinating with state agencies, educational institutions, and employers and targeting unserved and underserved communities, this initiative will equip local participants with both the technical and soft skills required for success in broadband-related occupations. Recognizing the unique skill sets needed in this industry—from cloud support to customer service—this initiative will prepare candidates for immediate roles but also for long-term career growth within broadband and adjacent sectors.	**all covered populations.** Align individuals' skills and potential with job requirements in the broadband sector, creating economic growth directly within communities and providing a pathway for career advancement in this rapidly evolving industry.	developing a skilled workforce, anticipating the expansion of broadband infrastructure and the resultant increase in job opportunities within this sector. • **Prepares candidates for diverse roles within broadband** such as network management, cloud support, customer service, and infrastructure installation, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the various aspects of broadband technology and services. • **Enhances career pathways in technology** for all covered populations by providing specialized training and preparation for roles in broadband and adjacent sectors, ensuring long-term professional growth.	evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals in Section 2.3.2.5 and workforce development in Section 2.3.2.3
Build partnerships with industry, government, and education sectors for technology-based economic development Optimize existing resources, such as grants, infrastructure, and expertise within Georgia's technology ecosystem, to spur technology-driven economic growth. Aligning with state agencies and local businesses, we will identify and scale innovative projects that promise high economic yield.	Foster technology-based economic development by building partnerships across industry, government, and education sectors, focusing on nurturing startups, upskilling the workforce, and facilitating public-private collaborations. This initiative targets particularly underserved areas, with the goal of transforming digital connectivity into sustainable economic growth for **all covered populations.**	• **Alleviates economic disparities** by leveraging partnerships to drive technology-based economic development, ensuring that the benefits of digital growth reach covered populations. • **Enhances workforce readiness** for technological advancements through targeted upskilling initiatives, preparing individuals for the evolving demands of a technology-centric job market. • **Facilitates the growth of local startups and businesses** by optimizing resources and aligning with state agencies and businesses, promoting an environment conducive to innovation and economic prosperity in the technology sector.	2027 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals in Section 2.3.2.5 and workforce development in Section 2.3.2.3.
Expand post-secondary opportunities Leverage Georgia's digital platforms such as gafutures.org,	Expand opportunities for students, particularly those from **low-income households, with disabilities and language**	• **Alleviates information barriers in post-secondary planning** by utilizing digital platforms such as gafutures.org to provide comprehensive guidance on	2026 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals in Section 2.3.2.5 and

Objective 3.G: Enhance workforce development and opportunities in telecommunications, technology, and broadband-related industries.

Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps Addressed	Timeline
to streamline post-secondary preparation. These platforms, supported by state-endorsed resources and departments, provide essential guidance on academic pathways, technical education, and special needs accommodations.	**barriers, and in other covered populations**, by focusing on self-advocacy and providing adaptation tools, thus ensuring they are well-prepared for a smooth transition to higher education and beyond. This initiative aims to equip them with the skills and resources needed for academic and professional success.	academic pathways and technical education, ensuring equitable access to information for students. • **Enhances accessibility to higher education resources** for students with disabilities and language barriers, offering tailored accommodations and support through state-endorsed platforms, bridging the gap in education equity. • **Facilitates informed decision-making** for post-secondary education by streamlining access to essential resources and information, enabling students to navigate their academic and career choices more effectively.	workforce development in Section 2.3.2.3.
Develop a pathway for employment in the helpdesk support sector This pathway will equip individuals with the skills needed for customer support roles at CAIs, local government, nonprofits as well as in tech companies or through freelance tech support services. By doing so, we aim to enhance employability and economic mobility for job seekers within the covered populations. The pathway could include: • Customer service and technical support skills • Basic computer hardware and software troubleshooting • Network troubleshooting and maintenance • Communication skills training • Professional development and job search assistance • Industry-recognized certification preparation	Expand job opportunities for **job seekers within the covered populations** as the availability of broadband expands. This expansion will result in an increased number of connected devices and a higher demand for maintenance and support services. This unlocks opportunity for skilled helpdesk support professionals who can assist with fixing and maintaining these devices.	• **Enhances employability and economic mobility** for individuals in covered populations by providing professional development, job search assistance, and industry-recognized certification preparation, aligning their skills with current job market needs. • **Bridges the digital skills gap** by offering comprehensive training that includes both technical know-how and soft skills, ensuring that individuals are fully prepared for various roles in the helpdesk support sector.	2025 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals in Section 2.3.2.5 and workforce development in Section 2.3.2.3.

5.1.5 Key challenge 4: Ensuring digital inclusivity as Georgia advances in digital services

The following proposed strategies and associated core activities and measurable objectives are designed to address the barriers for covered populations identified in Table 12 related to accessibility and inclusion.

5.1.5.1 Activities for Strategy 4.1: Improve universal design and accessibility in public digital resources

Objective 4.A: Members of covered populations can access government services online			
Objective 4.B: Widen the accessibility and awareness of assistive technology (AT)			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
Enhance the accessibility of public digital resources Improving universal design and accessibility in public digital resources encompasses the development and distribution of accessibility guidance with the goal of providing a seamless digital experience on various internet-enabled devices. In collaboration with GTA Digital Services, agencies, and elected officials, thorough audits will be conducted to improve website accessibility, ensuring that universal design standards are met across all platforms. Additionally, guidance will be provided to state and local agencies on best practices for website design and maintenance.	Promote inclusivity and ensure that individuals have equal access to information and services provided by state and local agencies. By developing and distributing accessibility guidance that aligns with accessibility standards, this activity will help state and local agencies create websites that are user-friendly and accessible to all. The implementation of this activity will impact **all covered populations, including individuals with visual, auditory, cognitive, and motor impairments and individuals with language barriers**.	• **Eliminates barriers to access** by providing guidance to state and local agencies on website design and maintenance that align with accessibility standards. This will help ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to information and services provided by state and local agencies, regardless of their impairments. • **Bridges the digital divide caused by a lack of assistive technology** by enabling cost-effective use of critical support tools. By following best practices for website design and maintenance that align with accessibility standards, state and local agencies can make it easier for individuals with disabilities to access their websites using assistive technology. • **Reduces the gap in digital skills and knowledge** by promoting inclusivity through the development and distribution of accessibility guidance. This will help state and local agencies create websites that are user-friendly and accessible to all, regardless of their level of digital literacy or expertise.	2025 evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for accessibility in Section 2.3.2.4.
Enhance accessibility and awareness of assistive	Enhance accessibility and awareness of assistive	• **Increases awareness of assistive technology** by providing	2025 and thereafter, evaluated biennially

Objective 4.A: Members of covered populations can access government services online			
Objective 4.B: Widen the accessibility and awareness of assistive technology (AT)			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
technology Leveraging existing resources like the Georgia Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (GLS), as well as other assistive and information technology assets, to forge partnerships with nonprofits and interagency collaborators to broaden the reach and impact of assistive technologies. This multifaceted strategy prioritizes technological access and robust outreach and awareness programs, facilitating seamless adoption and effective use by individuals with disabilities and the aging population.	technology for **all covered populations, especially individuals with disabilities.** By leveraging existing resources and forging partnerships with nonprofits and interagency collaborators, this strategy aims to facilitate seamless adoption and effective use of assistive technologies by individuals with disabilities and the aging population.	comprehensive outreach programs to ensure that individuals with disabilities and the aging population have access to the latest assistive technology solutions. • **Addresses gaps in the availability of assistive technology** and information technology assets, and by forging partnerships with nonprofits and interagency collaborators to broaden access to these resources. • **Eliminates geographic and socioeconomic barriers to assistive technology adoption** by developing a comprehensive strategy that targets underserved communities and prioritizes access and effective use of these technologies.	against measurable objective goals for accessibility in Section 2.3.2.4.

5.1.5.2 Activities for Strategy 4.2: Train Digital Navigators specialized in assisting covered populations

Objective 4.C: Train and deploy specialized Digital Navigators within community spaces serving covered populations			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
Partner with community-based organizations to employ Digital Navigators Deploy a network of Digital Navigators in key community spaces such as libraries, schools, parks and recreations centers, and senior centers. These navigators will guide individuals through digital resources, helping to close digital gaps and enhance community-wide digital literacy.	Leverage partnerships with community-based organizations and spaces that serve as safe, reliable, and accessible locations for members of the covered populations who may not have access to hands-on technology support at home. By partnering with these organizations, we can provide support to help empower individuals to become more digitally literate and self-sufficient, as well as to help them connect with the resources they need to for	• **Alleviates barriers to digital resource access** by deploying Digital Navigators in key community spaces, ensuring individuals, especially those without home technology support, can effectively utilize digital tools for health, education, and economic opportunities. • **Enhances community-wide digital literacy** through hands-on guidance from Digital Navigators, helping to close the digital gap for members of covered populations in accessible and familiar locations.	2026 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for accessibility in Section 2.3.2.4.

Objective 4.C: Train and deploy specialized Digital Navigators within community spaces serving covered populations			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
	health, education, and economic opportunities	• **Empowers individuals towards digital self-sufficiency** by leveraging partnerships with community-based organizations, providing the support and resources necessary for all to become more digitally literate and independent.	
Develop specialized training for Digital Navigators Develop and implement a targeted training program for Digital Navigators, focusing on the unique needs of veterans, the aging population, individuals with disabilities and other covered populations. These specialized navigators will offer tailored support to overcome barriers and enhance digital literacy. Specialized training could include: • Understanding of assistive technologies and adaptive tools • Understanding of specific technology terms that are commonly used and cultural competency and sensitivity individuals from diverse backgrounds • Teaching methods that are effective for adult learners and techniques for simplifying complex digital concepts • Knowledge of various technologies and tools that can be used to assist in accessing telehealth services and online mental health resources.	Develop comprehensive training to equip Digital Navigators with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide effective, patient, empathetic, and tailored support navigating technology. This knowledge would include familiarity with online resources, apps, and programs designed to help **all covered populations**, with a focus on **veterans, the aging population, individuals with disabilities, and English learners.**	• **Counteracts the shortage of skilled Digital Navigators** by developing a comprehensive training program that expands the pool of navigators equipped to support covered populations effectively, particularly in areas with limited digital literacy resources. • **Bridges the digital literacy gap for covered populations** by equipping Digital Navigators with cultural competency and effective adult teaching methods, ensuring that they can simplify complex digital concepts for diverse learners.	2025 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for accessibility in Section 2.3.2.4.
Develop Digital Navigators with specialized IT support skills Leverage Georgia's existing	Support **covered populations** who may face technical challenges when using technology, such as	• **Bridges the digital support gap in underserved areas** by deploying these skilled Digital Navigators to community	2026 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for

Objective 4.C: Train and deploy specialized Digital Navigators within community spaces serving covered populations			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
resources and partnerships to equip individuals with specialized IT support skills for roles in community helpdesk services. Targeting covered populations, this initiative aims to develop a cadre of Digital Navigators proficient in delivering culturally competent and effective IT support.	connectivity issues, software problems, or hardware failures, with the help of Digital Navigators who have specialized IT support skills. These Navigators can provide technical assistance and troubleshooting to those who need it, making it easier for them to overcome these challenges and use technology effectively.	helpdesk services, providing accessible and effective IT support where it is most needed. • **Accelerates the provision of IT support services** through Digital Navigators who are local to the communities they support, enabling them to offer quick, efficient assistance both in person and virtually, catering to immediate technology needs.	accessibility in Section 2.3.2.4.

5.1.6 Key challenge 5: Local communities lack resources and expertise for digital connectivity efforts

The following proposed strategies and associated core activities and measurable objectives are designed to grow local capacity and sustain digital connectivity efforts over time to address the barriers for covered populations identified in Table 12 related to broadband availability, broadband adoption, device access, digital skills, and online security.

5.1.6.1 Activities for Strategy 5.1: Build collaboration among state, local, and nonprofit entities

Objective 5.A: Establish local digital connectivity plans			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
Local digital connectivity plan development and implementation Leverage the collaboration among state agencies, regional planning commissions, local governments, and nonprofits in the digital connectivity ecosystem to support developing and implementing local digital connectivity plans.	Help cities and counties identify and prioritize their needs related to digital connectivity and access, creating a roadmap to address these needs and priorities effectively. By involving various stakeholders in the planning process, the plans can be tailored to meet the needs of **covered populations** and the unique requirements of each community. This approach will ensure that the plans are sustainable over the long term and that limited resources are being used efficiently to achieve the	• **Improves local understanding of community-specific digital needs** leading to more targeted and effective digital strategies tailored to the unique requirements of each city or county. • **Facilitates access to funding for digital initiatives** by guiding local entities in identifying, applying for, and managing funds, thereby enhancing their capacity to invest in crucial digital infrastructure and services.	2024 to 2029, based on availability of Digital Equity Capacity Grant, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals in Section 2.3.2.5.

Objective 5.A: Establish local digital connectivity plans			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
	greatest impact.		
Convene partners Build structures for stakeholders to work together across the state and across different demographics to share best practices, lessons learned, digital connectivity expertise, and resources to support those who face the greatest barriers to digital connectivity as well as to help organizations leverage capabilities and help partners that serve particular regions or specific covered populations.	Create a platform for stakeholders to collaborate and build strong partnerships while developing actionable steps to remove digital connectivity barriers. By bringing together stakeholders and partners, we can leverage their expertise, resources, and networks to enhance our impact, promote innovation, and improve outcomes for **all covered populations**.	• **Enhances resource sharing among diverse regions and populations** through structured collaboration, ensuring equitable distribution of digital resources and expertise, particularly to those facing the greatest barriers. • **Facilitates the adoption of successful digital strategies** across different demographics, leveraging shared experiences to improve digital connectivity in underserved areas. • **Amplifies the impact of digital initiatives** by enabling organizations to leverage each other's capabilities, leading to more effective and comprehensive digital connectivity solutions.	2024 to 2029, based on availability of Digital Equity Capacity Grant, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals in Section 2.3.2.5.
Establish community-driven support networks and services to help people connect, learn, and troubleshoot digital issues Localities and local community organizations are the lifeblood of work in digital connectivity. It is at the local level that community needs are best understood—and community members are best able to effect change. We therefore seek to support development at the local level of expertise and staffing to work on digital connectivity initiatives and to enable communities to prioritize the efforts and goals that are best suited to their unique circumstances.	Empower local communities to prioritize and lead their digital connectivity efforts, create sustainable solutions tailored to their specific needs, build long-term capacity for managing digital connectivity issues, and foster a culture of innovation and self-sufficiency.	• **Alleviates the digital knowledge gap** in local communities by establishing support networks that provide education and troubleshooting for digital issues, empowering residents with essential digital skills. • **Empowers communities to tailor digital efforts** to their specific circumstances, facilitating the prioritization and implementation of digital goals that resonate with and benefit the local population directly. • **Bridges the support gap for digital initiatives** by developing local expertise and staffing, ensuring continuous and specialized attention to the community's digital connectivity needs.	2026 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for collaboration and capacity building in Section 2.3.2.5.
Amplify outreach through comprehensive resource distribution Disseminate informational materials, toolkits, and	Utilize a comprehensive outreach strategy that includes diverse channels like social media, community events, and local media to break down barriers of digital	• **Alleviates the lack of digital resource awareness** in hard-to-reach communities by disseminating informational materials through various channels, ensuring everyone is	2023 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for broadband affordability and

Objective 5.A: Establish local digital connectivity plans			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
playbooks across various marketing channels to share expertise, best practices, and guidance. Emphasize marketing and outreach of programs and services, ensuring even the hardest-to-reach communities gain access and awareness of available digital connectivity resources.	exclusion for **all covered populations** and ensure these communications penetrate even the most remote or hard-to-reach communities.	informed about available digital connectivity programs and services. • **Enhances accessibility to digital tools** for populations that face barriers such as language differences, low literacy levels, or limited internet access, through targeted outreach efforts. • **Expands the reach of digital programs and services** by employing diverse marketing strategies, making sure that information about digital connectivity reaches every corner of the community, irrespective of socio-economic status.	access in Section 2.3.2.5.
Implement a "Train-the-Trainer" model leveraging local expertise A learning model where local experts and governments can exchange knowledge and skills with each other and with others.	Establish a collaborative, community-based training network that strengthens local skills in digital literacy and connectivity, focusing on educating and supporting communities to overcome unique challenges faced by **all covered populations**, thereby enhancing effective digital access and engagement across diverse groups.	• **Elevates local expertise** in addressing digital connectivity challenges specific to their community. • **Amplifies the impact of training programs** by creating a network of knowledgeable trainers within the community. • **Strengthens community resilience** in digital literacy and access, enhancing their ability to independently manage and advance their digital connectivity efforts.	2027 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for broadband affordability and access in Section 2.3.2.5.
Integrate digital connectivity objectives into existing strategies Align state agencies and local municipalities by incorporating digital connectivity goals into existing plans. This unified approach optimizes Georgia's resources, ensuring high-speed internet access for all while fostering cohesive, statewide digital connectivity efforts.	Ensure that digital connectivity goals are consistent across different levels of government while also integrating into broader strategic plans with a special focus on addressing the needs of **covered populations.** This integration optimizes the use of Georgia's resources, avoiding duplication of efforts and ensuring that investments strategically cater to the digital requirements of all communities, particularly underserved and rural areas and are strategically aligned	• **Establishes proactive and uniform digital connectivity policies** at both state and local levels, ensuring strategic alignment in the integration of digital resources such as apps, online forms, mobile kiosks, and online training modules. • **Advances the overall digital readiness of the state** by embedding digital connectivity into various strategic plans, preparing Georgia to meet future digital challenges and opportunities effectively.	2027 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for collaboration and capacity building in Section 2.3.2.5.

Objective 5.A: Establish local digital connectivity plans			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
	with the state's overall goals.		

5.1.6.2 Activities for Strategy 5.2: Support and develop local capacity through a statewide consortium

Objective 5.B: Establish a statewide digital connectivity consortium			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
Fund local Fellows Invest in the local talent of communities by providing funding for fellowship positions aimed at individuals who demonstrate potential and commitment to driving digital initiatives and improvements within their localities. These fellows, selected from various covered populations, will work on specific digital projects or programs that align with the broader goals of enhancing digital connectivity and equity. Through this funding, fellows can contribute to local digital transformation efforts, bringing fresh perspectives and innovative solutions. Their work might include: • Developing new digital literacy programs. • Aiding in the implementation of connectivity projects. • Conducting research to inform future digital strategies.	Support the professional development of fellows, focusing on members of **covered populations**, while also addressing the unique digital needs and challenges of local communities. By investing in these local champions, the program aims to cultivate a culture of digital leadership and innovation at the grassroots level, contributing to the sustainable development of digital infrastructure and literacy in the area.	• **Alleviates the shortage of local digital expertise** by funding local fellows who can drive digital initiatives, directly addressing the gap in skilled professionals needed for community-specific digital projects. • **Bridges the digital strategy and implementation gap** by empowering local fellows to translate digital plans into actionable projects, ensuring that theoretical digital strategies are effectively realized at the community level. • **Advances sustainable digital development** within communities by investing in fellows who are committed to long-term digital improvements, fostering continuous growth and innovation in local digital infrastructure and literacy.	2025 to 2029, based on availability of Digital Equity Capacity Grant, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for collaboration and capacity building in Section 2.3.2.5.
Convene and connect funding stakeholders for digital connectivity An integral part of building the statewide digital connectivity consortium is bringing together	Establish a dynamic and collaborative environment where key stakeholders can share insights, resources, and strategies for improving digital infrastructure and services. By uniting	• **Mitigates financial constraints in digital projects** by connecting community initiatives with philanthropic organizations and investors, ensuring adequate funding for essential digital connectivity efforts.	2025 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for collaboration and capacity building in

Objective 5.B: Establish a statewide digital connectivity consortium

Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps Addressed	Timeline
diverse community stakeholders with potential funders to address the digital divide. This initiative fosters a deep understanding of digital connectivity needs and engages philanthropic organizations, social investment groups, and foundations to contribute resources and funding. By forming this collaborative network, the initiative supports and amplifies digital connectivity initiatives throughout the state, particularly focusing on areas and populations most in need, thereby reinforcing the broader objectives of the statewide consortium.	government bodies, private sector investors, chambers of commerce, non-profits, and community groups, this platform seeks to align financial efforts and resources effectively. The goal is to ensure that funding for digital connectivity is strategic, impactful, and specifically addresses the needs of **all covered populations**. This concerted effort is essential to enhance the efficiency of investments, reduce overlap in initiatives, and collectively advance digital connectivity.	• **Alleviates the resource disparity in underserved areas** by mobilizing funds and support to these regions, addressing the uneven distribution of digital infrastructure and services. • **Bridges the gap between need and funding availability** by actively engaging foundations and social investment groups, channeling their resources to address critical areas in digital connectivity.	Section 2.3.2.5.

5.1.6.3 Activities for Strategy 5.3: Sustain and grow state and local efforts in digital connectivity

Georgia's commitment to digital connectivity means a significant commitment of resources to sustain the initiatives contemplated in this Plan. To sustain these efforts over time, Georgia will require resources beyond what NTIA will provide under the Digital Equity Capacity grant program. GTA alongside the State Collective will seek to develop strategy for continuing the work launched under this Plan by partnering with philanthropy and seeking other funding sources, and by tracking the impact of Georgia's digital connectivity efforts to quantify the business case for further investment in digital connectivity programs.

Objective 5.D: Monitor the financial sustainability of digital connectivity efforts

Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps addressed	Timeline
Integrate digital connectivity into state planning and program implementation efforts Incorporate digital connectivity elements into a wide array of state projects and sectors. This includes embedding broadband	Create a sustainable comprehensive strategy that leverages digital connectivity for state-wide development, growth, and service enhancement. By embedding digital connectivity as a key	• **Mitigates the disparities in service delivery** by ensuring digital connectivity is a key consideration in all state service domains, enhancing the effectiveness and reach of services to covered populations. • **Advances economic**	2027 evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for sustainability in Section 2.3.2.5.

Objective 5.D: Monitor the financial sustainability of digital connectivity efforts

Implementation activity	Purpose	Gaps addressed	Timeline
considerations into infrastructure development, educational programs, healthcare services, and economic strategies. By doing so, the initiative ensures that the critical role of digital connectivity is recognized and integrated across various domains, enhancing the scope and effectiveness of these projects.	component of broader state development and service delivery, ensuring that every sector that supports the **covered populations** benefits from the advancements in broadband expansion and digital connectivity.	**development initiatives** by including broadband expansion in economic strategies, fostering growth in areas that have historically lacked digital infrastructure, and supporting covered populations' participation in the digital economy.	
Adapt to emerging digital connectivity needs Continuously assess and adapt to changes in the digital landscape through an integrated approach to budgeting, utilizing both state and local resources, and actively seeking federal grants to ensure sustainable funding for Georgia's digital connectivity projects. By coordinating these financial sources and maintaining an open dialogue with philanthropic and social investment organizations, the activity ensures that Georgia's digital connectivity efforts are up-to-date and financially sustainable, supporting the state's ongoing efforts to expand and enhance digital connectivity.	Strategically leveraging various funding sources to create a stable financial foundation that addresses current digital connectivity needs and anticipates future requirements. This activity ensures that **all covered populations** benefit from continuous and up-to-date digital connectivity initiatives in their community. It requires meeting immediate digital needs and investing in the futureproofing of digital infrastructure and services. for the benefit of all communities in Georgia.	• **Offsets limitations in federal funding** from sources like the NTIA's Digital Equity Capacity Grant by exploring alternative funding avenues, ensuring that the implementation of the state's digital connectivity plan is not solely dependent on federal grants and can be fully realized. • **Enhances the adaptability of digital connectivity** to emerging technologies and needs by maintaining a fluid funding strategy that allows for quick response to changes in the digital landscape.	2025 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for sustainability in Section 2.3.2.5.
Collect, analyze, and publish relevant data to demonstrate baselines and changes in digital connectivity metrics and outcomes as part of updates to the Georgia Digital Connectivity Plan Publish relevant data analytics related to barriers and obstacles to covered populations and review, evaluate, and update Plan goals in alignment with state priorities, measurable objectives, KPIs, and implementation	Accurate data on covered populations will inform sound goalsetting, prioritization, and activities for GTA in digital connectivity efforts and will benefit organizations directly serving **all covered populations**.	• **Alleviates information gaps regarding digital access challenges** faced by covered populations, enabling more targeted and effective interventions. • **Advances the overall effectiveness of digital equity initiatives** by using data to continually assess and refine strategies, ensuring they remain relevant and impactful. • **Fosters transparency and accountability in digital connectivity progress** by clearly	2024 and thereafter (this effort is already underway), evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for sustainability in Section 2.3.2.5.

Objective 5.D: Monitor the financial sustainability of digital connectivity efforts			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps addressed**	**Timeline**
activities as needed to guide nonprofits, ISPs, and philanthropy regarding potential impactful investments.		showcasing where advancements are occurring and where additional efforts are required	
Fund research and development and invest in best practices for digital connectivity Employ an evidence-based approach to identify and invest in digital connectivity best practices. Utilizing data and insights, GTA will collaborate with local organizations to make informed, transparent decisions regarding digital connectivity that can be scaled statewide.	Discover new possibilities for growth and development in digital connectivity, which will help the state stay ahead of the curve in terms of innovation and technology. This investment seeks to identify, refine, and expand on successful models that have demonstrated positive effects in reducing the digital divide. An evidence-based approach will be used to ensure that tailored digital connectivity solutions are implemented to increase the effectiveness of digital access and literacy programs.	• **Enhances the effectiveness of digital connectivity programs** by funding research and development that focuses on discovering innovative solutions to improve internet access and usage, especially for covered populations. • **Advances the state's position in digital innovation and technology** through focused research and development, ensuring that Georgia stays ahead of emerging trends and can effectively respond to the evolving digital needs of covered populations. • **Rectifies disparities in digital literacy and access** by using data-driven insights to develop and scale up effective programs that enhance digital skills and connectivity.	2026 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for sustainability in Section 2.3.2.5.
Provide technical assistance support Provide support and technical guidance to localities, nonprofits, and CAIs to enhance their ability to secure grants supporting broadband access and digital connectivity (including NTIA Digital Equity Competitive Grant funds) as well as preparing them for other funding opportunities that may emerge over the next 5 to 10 years. This approach ensures a long-term strategy in acquiring resources for digital equity projects. The aim is to enhance the engagement and participation of localities in technical assistance programs offered by the Georgia	Providing crucial support to organizations serving **covered populations,** this activity focuses on enhancing their ability to secure grants, a vital aspect in sustaining digital connectivity initiatives. By assisting in the grant application process, more organizations can implement programs that benefit the covered populations they support.	• **Bridges the resource gap in underfunded communities** by assisting them in acquiring funds essential for digital equity projects, which can dramatically improve access to technology and digital literacy.	2024 to 2029, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for collaboration and capacity building in Section 2.3.2.5.

Objective 5.D: Monitor the financial sustainability of digital connectivity efforts			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps addressed**	**Timeline**
Department of Community Affairs, GTA, and other organizations. By providing this support, the initiative seeks to increase the percentage of localities that participate in these programs each year, thereby enhancing their ability to access crucial funds.			

5.1.6.4 Activities for Strategy 5.4: Create a repository of digital connectivity insights

Objective 5.C: Establish a Digital Connectivity Insights Hub			
Implementation activity	**Purpose**	**Gaps Addressed**	**Timeline**
Develop Insights Hub for Georgia's Digital Connectivity data The Insights Hub is a dynamic digital connectivity dashboard that integrates the latest data on Georgia's broadband availability with information from our Community Connections Map and other data sources. It is designed as a comprehensive tool for policymakers, researchers, and community leaders, offering real-time analytics and insights into Georgia's digital landscape	Facilitate informed decision-making and strategic planning for enhancing digital connectivity for **covered populations.** By providing detailed insights and data, the hub aims support the development and implementation of targeted and guide efforts to improve digital connectivity statewide. . With its intuitive design and accessible data visualization, the hub serves as a valuable resource for tracking digital infrastructure progress and identifying connectivity gaps across the state.	• **Alleviates information disparities** by making digital connectivity data easily accessible to community leaders and researchers. • **Advances the understanding of broadband availability and usage** across different communities, particularly for covered populations, enabling targeted interventions for improved digital access. • **Supports the development of data-driven solutions** to digital connectivity challenges by offering comprehensive analytics on broadband coverage and digital access, facilitating informed decision-making for state-wide digital connectivity enhancements.	2024 to 2026 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for Digital Connectivity Insights Hub in Section 2.3.2.5.
Provide asset information Maintain a comprehensive inventory that catalogs technology resources, labs, hubs, digital literacy programs, partner organizations, and best practices. This resource is periodically updated to ensure its relevance and accuracy, making it an	Ensure that **all covered populations** have access to current information about available technology resources and programs. This enables organizations that serve them to identify potential collaborators and adopt effective strategies for enhancing digital	• **Alleviates the lack of awareness about available technology resources** in communities, particularly those serving covered populations. • **Enhances collaboration among various organizations and communities** by providing a detailed catalog of potential partners and resources.	2023 and thereafter, evaluated biennially against measurable objective goals for Digital Connectivity Insights Hub in Section 2.3.2.5.

invaluable tool for communities and organizations seeking to identify and utilize various technological assets available to them.	literacy and connectivity.	• **Mitigates the challenges in accessing up-to-date information on digital literacy programs** and technology hubs, ensuring that communities have the knowledge to leverage these assets.	

5.2   Timeline

This timeline of potential implementation activities is an estimate, contingent on the availability of a diverse range of funding sources, which may include state and federal government resources private sector partnerships, community investments, and philanthropic investments. This timeline remains flexible and subject to change depending on conditions that could extend or escalate the State's ability to develop and sustain these initiatives. Figure 8 includes tangible milestones and Table 40 shows implementation tasks listed in Section 5.1 that are aligned with stated strategic goals listed in Section 2.3.1 and measurable objectives listed in Section 2.3.2.

Figure 8. Digital connectivity strategic activity milestones

Phase 1 (2024 – 2026): Implement, evaluate, and engage

- Allocate grant funds to support and enhance current digital connectivity work, initiating tailored pilot programs in regions with the greatest need for digital connectivity.

- Complete data collection for measurable objectives for covered populations. Establish a continuous impact tracking and evaluation system.

- Maintain continuous community engagement and establish a feedback system that informs and shapes each phase of the program.

Phase 2 (2027 – 2029): Support, adapt, and sustain

- Provide technical assistance and funding expand successful pilots and established digital connectivity programs.

- Adjust implementation strategies based on data-driven insights, stakeholder feedback, and evolving community needs.

- Formulate a framework for long-term program sustainability, informed by progress metrics and impact analysis.

- Q1-Q4 2027: Evaluate progress of implementation strategies and activities biennially using measurable objective KPIs and adjust as needed

- Q1-2 2028: Prepare and share reports with internal and external stakeholders, communicating the program's impact, lessons learned, and plans for sustained digital connectivity efforts.

Phase 3 (2030 and beyond): Expand, grow, and communicate

- Continue to support the strategic expansion of programs.

- Conduct future planning to for sustained growth and program effectiveness, while adapting to evolving community needs and emerging digital connectivity challenges.

- Q1-Q4 2029: Evaluate progress of implementation strategies and activities biennially using measurable objective KPIs leading to updating the Georgia Digital Connectivity Plan

- 2030: Update of the Georgia Digital Connectivity Plan

Table 40. Digital Connectivity Implementation timeline

Challenge	Strategy	Key Activities	Phase 1							Phase 2						Phase 3		
			2023	2024 Q1-2	2024 Q3-4	2025 Q1-2	2025 Q3-4	2026 Q1-2	2026 Q3-4	2027 Q1-2	2027 Q3-4	2028 Q1-2	2028 Q3-4	2029 Q1-2	2029 Q3-4	2030 Q1-2	2030 Q3-4	2031+
1: Lack of broadband availability	1.1: Increase access to residential broadband infrastructure	Execute BEAD Program																
	1.2: Expand collaborative efforts as broadband progresses	Require grantee low-cost offerings																
		Use public access channels and Georgia Broadcast Radio Services to disseminate information about digital connectivity initiatives																
		Utilize innovative outreach solutions for covered populations																
2: Low-income households struggle to afford broadband services, devices, and technical support	2.1: Partner with ISPs and community stakeholder for improved broadband affordability and device accessibility	Develop educational materials	ongoing															
		Encourage ISP partnerships for ACP enrollment drives																
		Fund library- and other CAI-based ACP enrollment drives																
		Encourage ISP low-cost offerings	ongoing															
	2.2: Establish a device ecosystem	Develop an ecosystem for devices																
		Provide technical support for device maintenance																
		Develop a toolkit for residents and nonprofits for accessing internet-related resources																
	2.3: Expand device ownership initiatives	Fund device repurposing and redistribution initiatives																
		Launch a comprehensive device ownership program through public-private partnerships																
		Provide device access for the incarcerated population and justice-impacted individuals																
	2.4: Leverage CAIs to expand community-level device access	Fund library-based technical support																
		Establish partnership to create a device lending program, where CAIs act as key distribution points																
		Support device access and technichal support for aging individuals																
	2.5: Prioritize and prepare for broadband and digital connectivity in counties with highest digital inequities	Develop a weighted scoring model to analyze and identify areas of intersection of multiple factors																
		Develop comprehensive digital connectivity ecosystem																

Challenge	Strategy	Key Activities	Phase 1							Phase 2						Phase 3		
			2023	2024 Q1-2	2024 Q3-4	2025 Q1-2	2025 Q3-4	2026 Q1-2	2026 Q3-4	2027 Q1-2	2027 Q3-4	2028 Q1-2	2028 Q3-4	2029 Q1-2	2029 Q3-4	2030 Q1-2	2030 Q3-4	2031+
3: Covered populations need support to develop digital skills, including skills to protect themselves and their personal data online	3.1: Develop a foundational digital skills framework for all Georgians	Create a digital skills guidebook with digital competency benchmarks		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
		Integrate digital financial literacy into the statewide digital skills framework		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
		Standardize cybersecurity and privacy guidelines in the digital skills framework		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
		Integrate digital civic engagement within the digital skills framework		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
		Integrate artificial intelligence (AI) literacy into the digital skills framework			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
	3.2: Empower covered populations with digital healthcare skills	Expand regional telehealth capacity and accessibility			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	▒	▒	▒
		Develop specialized digital healthcare skills			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	▒	▒	▒
		Enable Mobile Health Units to support digital skills and access					▒	▒	▒	█	▒	▒	▒	▒	█	▒	▒	▒
		Support tech-enabled health literacy partnerships						█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	▒	▒	▒
	3.3: Foster online safety and privacy awareness within digital literacy	Fund community-based security and privacy training				█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
		Run a campaign to raise awareness about the importance of cybersecurity and online privacy		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
		Utilize statewide cybersecurity resources for integrated digital skills training			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	▒	▒	▒
		Support safe internet practices to combat human trafficking		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
	3.4: Empower community organizations for comprehensive digital literacy	Fund community-based digital skills training			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
		Establish collaborative digital literacy and technology certification programs with educational Institutions			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	▒	▒	▒
		Develop a Digital Navigator volunteer corps					█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
		Implement flexible learning spaces for inclusive access								▒	▒	▒	▒	▒	█	▒	▒	▒
	3.5: Enhance digital literacy through youth and adult education platforms	Leverage STEM and Computer Science as platforms for digital literacy enhancement				█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	▒	▒	▒
		Leverage Georgia's thriving arts and media sectors to boost digital literacy across generations				▒	▒	▒	▒	█	▒	▒	▒	▒	█	▒	▒	▒
		Integrate digital skills curricula and assessments into existing job training and job placement services								█	█	█	█	█	█	▒	▒	▒
	3.6: Leverage digital connectivity to empower opportunities for workforce and economic advancement	Support technology certification programs				█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	▒	▒	▒
		Establish workforce development programs that recruit and train individuals for broadband-related occupations		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	▒	▒	▒
		Build partnerships with industry, government, and education sectors for technology-based economic development				▒	▒	▒	▒	█	▒	▒	▒	▒	█	▒	▒	▒
		Expand post-secondary opportunities							█	█	█	█	█	█	█	▒	▒	▒
		Develop a pathway for employment in the helpdesk support sector				█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	▒	▒	▒

Challenge	Strategy	Key Activities	2023	2024 Q1-2	2024 Q3-4	2025 Q1-2	2025 Q3-4	2026 Q1-2	2026 Q3-4	2027 Q1-2	2027 Q3-4	2028 Q1-2	2028 Q3-4	2029 Q1-2	2029 Q3-4	2030 Q1-2	2030 Q3-4	2031+
						Phase 1				Phase 2						Phase 3		
4: Ensuring digital inclusivity as Georgia advances in digital services	4.1: Improve universal design and accessibility in public digital resources	Enhance the accessibility of public digital resources																
		Enhance accessibility and awareness of assistive technology																
	4.2: Train Digital Navigators specialized in assisting covered populations	Partner with community-based organizations to employ Digital Navigators																
		Develop specialized training for Digital Navigators																
		Develop Digital Navigators with specialized IT support skills																
5: Local communities lack resources and expertise for Digital Connectivity efforts	5.1: Build collaboration among state, local, and nonprofit entities	Local Digital Connectivity plan development and implementation																
		Convene partners																
		Establish community-driven support networks and services to help people connect, learn, and troubleshoot digital issues																
		Amplify outreach through comprehensive resource distribution																
		Implement a "Train-the-Trainer" model leveraging local expertise																
		Integrate digital connectivity objectives into existing strategies																
	5.2: Support and develop local capacity through a statewide consortium	Fund local Fellows																
		Convene and connect funding stakeholders for digital connectivity																
	5.3: Sustain and grow the State and local efforts in digital connectivity	Integrate digital connectivity into state planning and program implementation efforts																
		Adapt to emerging digital connectivity needs																
		Collect, analyze, and publish relevant data to demonstrate baselines and changes in digital connectivity metrics and outcomes as part of updates to the Georgia Digital Connectivity Plan																
		Fund research and development and invest in best practices for digital connectivity																
		Provide technical assistance support																
	5.4 Create a repository of Digital Connectivity insights	Develop Insights Hub for Georgia's Digital Connectivity data																
		Provide asset information																

Legend

	Implementation activity underway and subject to evaluation in early 2027 and late 2029.
	Target milestone for evaluation of activity impact on achieving strategic goals using key performance indicators of relevant measurable objectives. Note that most evaluation milestones in late 2029 are timed to inform updates to the Digital Connectivity Plan anticipated in 2030.
	Conditional: Requires Funding & State Collective Capacity. Execution hinges on available financial resources and successful capacity building within the State Collective.

6 Conclusion

Our vision for a fully connected Georgia is to ensure that every Georgian has reliable and affordable access to the internet along with the necessary tools and skills to unlock opportunities for educational advancement, economic success, improved health, and strengthened social ties. This will create more connected, resilient, and prosperous communities and cultivate an environment across the State where our workforce can thrive, our infrastructure can support growth, and our industries can continue to lead the way.

However, some digital connectivity barriers are found in Georgia as is true throughout the country. The data show that one critical challenge faced by covered populations is they often lack reliable broadband infrastructure in their communities. Many areas struggle with limited internet access, hindering educational attainment, economic growth, and access to telehealth services. This divide exacerbates disparities in education, employability, and access to essential online resources and opportunities, and overall quality of life.

The affordability of broadband services and devices serves as another barrier. Low-income households may find it difficult to afford the costs of broadband subscriptions and necessary hardware, such as computers or tablets. As a result, individuals in these households face restricted access to online education, job opportunities, and crucial government services. This digital divide limits social mobility and access to the benefits of the digital world.

Furthermore, the data collected for this Plan show that digital literacy and skills gaps hinder digital connectivity in Georgia. Many residents lack the necessary skills to navigate digital platforms, protect their online security, and discern credible information from misinformation. This lack of digital skills leaves individuals susceptible to privacy breaches and exposes them to cyber threats. Moreover, certain demographic groups, such as seniors and minority populations, face additional barriers due to unfamiliarity with technology or language barriers. Addressing these challenges requires efforts that encompass infrastructure expansion, affordable access, digital skills training, and targeted support for underserved communities to ensure that all Georgians can participate fully in the digital economy.

The State of Georgia will aim to reduce these barriers to digital connectivity to create conditions that enable all Georgians to equitably access and use the internet.

In that envisioned future, all Georgians will have access to the following **five critical elements of digital connectivity:**

1. Access to affordable, reliable internet connectivity at home and in their community

2. A computing device and the opportunity to maintain it

3. The opportunity to learn and apply digital skills

4. Tools and practical knowledge for safe online engagement

5. Accessible and usable online government and community resources for all abilities

To achieve this vision, the State of Georgia will adopt the following framework principles for its digital connectivity efforts:

1. **Targeted impact on key populations for statewide growth:** In conjunction with our efforts for statewide broadband expansion, we recognize the need for specialized outreach, support, and investments aimed at "covered populations," as designated by the Digital Equity Act of 2021. These populations include low-income households, aging populations, incarcerated individuals, veterans, people with disabilities, people with language barriers, racial and ethnic minorities, and rural inhabitants. To optimize impact and ensure efficient use of resources, focused investments will be directed toward initiatives aimed at enabling these populations to participate fully in society and the digital economy. Through this targeted approach, we can nurture thriving, resilient communities throughout Georgia that are conducive to both economic growth and robust full civic participation for all residents.

2. **Collaborate and strengthen our partnerships:** Digital connectivity work will require collaboration and partnerships. Our community, inclusive of members with lived experiences, regional and local governments, internet service providers (ISPs), workforce organizations, philanthropic entities, corporate partners, community anchor institutions (CAIs), and community-based organizations, will actively partner to solicit ideas, insights, priorities, and lessons learned to strengthen our digital connectivity ecosystem. Together, we will prioritize identifying and addressing gaps to ensure equitable digital access and inclusion across our diverse communities.

3. **Build on existing achievements and collaborations**: As a statewide community, we will leverage and benefit from the efforts of entities that have spent years developing expertise and capabilities in digital connectivity. Rather than attempt to replicate or re-create those capabilities, we will enhance coordination among state agencies, local governments, and nonprofit partners. By sharing timely data, focused support, and helpful resources we aim to align our collective initiatives with established local and regional digital connectivity plans. In this way, the State of Georgia will respect and amplify local and community experience and know-how, working to support its local government and nonprofit partners that have proven capabilities in digital connectivity.

4. **Prioritize data and rigorous information gathering:** Data will be our guide for informed and impactful actions. Through our united community, which includes local and regional governments, state agencies, philanthropic organizations, and the private sector, we recognize the value in using data as a roadmap for effective action. These entities are encouraged to leverage data to make wise investment decisions, focusing funding on the regions and communities that most urgently require digital access and skills. These efforts will be enhanced by continually gathering, synthesizing, and updating data through tools like the Georgia Broadband Map, periodic surveys, and technical assistance. These synthesized data will guide smart investments in addressing digital connectivity gaps in the communities where our covered populations live and interact.

5. **Smart growth for lasting impact:** Our goal is to support the development of programs that can expand and adapt, ensuring that all Georgians, including our covered populations, remain connected. These programs should be designed for long-lasting impact, aligning with our vision of educational advancement, economic success, and community resilience across Georgia. By thinking forward in this Plan, we are laying the groundwork for prosperous and resilient communities throughout our State.

Appendix A: Asset inventory – additional assets

Additional digital connectivity assets

The following table details additional entities that have digital connectivity assets including broadband adoption, digital literacy, workforce development, and/or related programs.

Table 41. Additional digital connectivity assets by covered population(s)

Asset name	Description	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural	Low-income
Athens Community Council on Aging	Digital skills, education, workforce, and OATS training programs for older adults in addition to basic social services.	x							
Carroll County Schools	This program provides desktop computers, laptops, or tablets and technical support, as well as supporting online accessibility and inclusivity for students who lack devices. The budget is under $25,000 and over 100 people were served in 2022, with a target of 101-250 people over the life of the project.								x
Clayton County Public Library	The Library provides access to Wi-Fi and devices, with PCs available at branches and devices available for checkout. The Library's Bookmobile is outfitted with Wi-Fi. The Library offers one-on-one technical help for residents to learn how to use devices and software The Library provides hotspot devices for use with patron's personal devices.	x		x	x	x	x		x
Clayton County Public Schools	Through a remote "extending learning beyond the classroom" program, County schools support college and career preparation.				x	x	x		x

Asset name	Description	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural	Low-income
Clayton County Senior Services	Senior Services provides computer tablets for seniors' home use.	x							x
Cobb County Libraries	Cobb County Libraries offer Digital Literacy Workshops sponsored by AT&T on a variety of topics including cybersecurity, internet basics, and classes in software and on using devices.	x		x	x	x	x		x
Compudopt Atlanta	Programs serve to eliminate limited access to computers, facilitate growth in technical and digital literacy skills, help provide no- or low-cost high-speed internet options, and support the future of youth and their communities.								x
Designstyles & Co, Dream Center	Business incubator in Morrow, GA, designed with space amenities and resources that allow young people and adults in underserved communities. Provides youth programs and OATS digital skills training for adults 50 and over.	x							x
Divine Reach Education and Counsel	Adult literacy and other programs for youth and adults. Provides OATS programs for seniors.	x							
Dodge County	The County is developing a digital connectivity program for broadband access and technical support.	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
Empower Southwest Georgia - American Connection Corps (ACC) Fellow	The ACC Fellow supports applicants to the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), conduct a leadership forum, organize workshops for builders and construction leadership for broadband, serve as a public advocate, educate consumers on broadband access, host learning sessions, and assist local elected officials with planning and processing permits and							x	x

Asset name	Description	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural	Low-income
	educating voters. The Fellow will also work to establish a similar group with the county administrators in the region								
Empower Southwest Georgia - broadband community outreach	Empower Southwest Georgia applied to the American Connection Corps (ACC) for a $150,000 grant to develop paid staff consisting of three people—an intern, a manager, and a field director—to conduct community organizing and community outreach including for broadband. It also submitted a Host Organization application to ACC for an ACC Fellow.							x	x
Evans County Charter School System	The Wi-Fi on the Go program supports internet availability and affordability by providing parents of students and school employees with a hotspot and unlimited data for $50 per month.[257]							x	x
Forsyth County Senior Services	Various programs for seniors. Provides OATS programs for digital inclusion.	x							
Fort Gaines, City of	The City of Fort Gaines in Clay County develops and distributes accessible online content directed at populations with specific needs, such as seniors, low-income residents, those with low-literacy, and those whose first language is not English.	x				x			x
Gainesville City Schools	Through Chromebooks for Students, City schools provide desktop computers, laptops, or tablets and technical support for individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners and/or have low levels of literacy. The school system					X			x

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[257] "Wi-Fi on the Go," Evans County Charter School System, https://www.evans.k12.ga.us/article/506223.

Asset name	Description	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural	Low-income
	also provides families with information about the ACP. With a budget of over $500,000, the program served 100 people in 2022 and has a target to serve over 500 people over the life of the project.								
Georgia Department of Corrections - Washington State Prison	At the Washington State Prison, GDC provides cybersecurity training and training, equipment, subsidized services, or other resources to facilitate access to telehealth and telemedicine services. It also trains teachers of broadband skills and digital literacy and provides hotspots and free or subsidized internet access.		x		X				
Georgia State University	The Digital Learners to Leaders (DLL) program provides professional development opportunities to Georgia State students seeking both four-year and two-year degrees, including those at Perimeter College.								X
Gilmer County Board of Education	The Chromebook 1-to-1 program provides desktop computers, laptops, or tablets and technical support, and has a budget of between $100,000 and $249,999.				x	x	x		x
Lift Zones	21 Comcast Lift Zones located throughout the state combine 1 Gbps connectivity to community centers with digital connectivity programming, available to users at the following sites:[258] • Las Plaza Americas • Girls Inc • Raising Expectations Inc, Washington Learning Pod	x		x	x	x	x		x

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[258] "Lift Zones," Comcast, https://corporate.comcast.com/impact/digital-equity/lift-zones.

Asset name	Description	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural	Low-income
	• Boys & Girls Club Saint Simons Island • Boys & Girls Club SE Georgia – Glynn Villa • Boys & Girls Club SE Georgia – Terry Thomas Club • Finish Strong Learning Pod Lift Zone at Siloam Church International • Inspiredu • Flint River Community Center Boys & Girls Club in Riverdale • Urban League of Great Atlanta – At Promise Youth Center • Gathering Place Community Center • Boys & Girls Club, E.W. Hagler Club in Augusta • Boys & Girls Club, Dogwood Terrace Club in Augusta • Boys & Girls Club, McDuffie County Club in Thomson • Paralyzed Veterans of America SE Chapter at Hephzibah • Frank Callen Boys and Girls Club Savannah, GA • Lost-N-Found Youth Center • Mercy Housing • Hosea Helps • Center for Pan Asian Community Services								
Macon Housing Authority	The citywide Computer Classes program, which addresses internet availability and affordability, digital literacy, data privacy and cybersecurity, has a budget	x							x

Asset name	Description	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural	Low-income
	of under $25,000. It served 25 people in 2022, with a target to serve 500 people over the life of project.								
Macon-Bibb Mayor's Literacy Alliance	Its goal is to help increase the graduation rate, decrease the drop-out rate, and lower the adult illiteracy rate by 50 percent over the next 10 years.	x				x			
Morehouse College	In a partnership with Microsoft for the 2020-2021 academic year, Morehouse College, a historically black college or university (HBCU), provided newly enrolled students with Microsoft Surface 2-in-1 tablets.						x		
Northstar Digital Literacy	Northstar Digital Literacy is a program that defines the basic skills needed to use a computer and the internet in daily life, employment, and higher education. Northstar Digital Skills classes are offered both in-person and online. There are over 75 Northstar locations across the state: • 100 Black of Men of Atlanta Inc. • Albany Technical College • Albany Career Center • Athens Technical College Adult Education Program • Atlanta Public Schools Atlanta WorkSource Georgia, Adult Education Center • Augusta Technical College • Catholic Charities Chamblee Office • Center for Pan Asian Community Services • Central Georgia Technical College Bibb, Baldwin, Houston	x		x	x	x	x	x	x

Asset name	Description	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural	Low-income
	• Chattanooga Goodwill – Mack Gaston Community Center • Chattahoochee Technical College – North Metro, Canton • Clayton County Adult Education • Coastal Pines Technical College • Cobb County Adult Education Center • DigitalCrafts • Georgia Piedmont Technical College – DeKalb, Newton, Starnes, South DeKalb • GNTC – Gordon County Adult Education, Whitfield Murray Adult Education, Floyd County Adult Education • Goodwill of North Georgia – Career centers as Smyrna, Old National, Stockbridge, Decatur, Woodstock, East Athens, Oakwood, Cornelia, Rome, Cartersville, Dawsonville • International Rescue Committee • Lanier Tech – Hall County, Wimberly Center (Barrow County) • Literacy Action • Midtown Career Center, Midtown Training Center • Newnan Career Center • North Georgia Technical College – East, West • Oconee Fall Line Technical College – North, South • Ogeechee Technical College								

Asset name	Description	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural	Low-income
	• Opportunity Center at Goodwill SEGA • LaGrange Career Center • Savannah Technical College-Army Education Center, Effingham, White Bluff • South Georgia Technical College • Southeastern Technical College • Southern Regional Technical College – Thomasville • Thomas Crossroads Training Center • Valdosta Career Center, Valdosta Training Center • West Georgia Technical College Coweta, Douglas, Murphy, Troup • Wiregrass Georgia Technical College – Valdosta, Coffee, Ben Hill- Irwin								
Northwest Georgia Housing Authority, Rome GA	The Housing Authority is developing a digital connectivity program and wants to expand to provide programs for digital skills and literacy, devices (laptops, computers, tablets), Digital Navigators, and broadband access. Its Digital Skills +50 program, a citywide digital literacy program for residents over 50, has a budget of under $25,000. It served under 25 people in 2022, with a target of over 50 people for the life of project.	x							x
PCs for People	This Atlanta-based national nonprofit social enterprise works to get low-cost quality computers and internet into the homes of individuals, families, and nonprofits with low income.								X

Asset name	Description	Aging	Incarcerated	Veterans	Disabilities	Language barrier	Racial/ethnic minority	Rural	Low-income
Savannah Public School System	Through various Countywide programs, schools provide desktop computers, laptops, or tablets and technical support; and address digital literacy, data privacy and cybersecurity, and online accessibility and inclusivity. The budget is over $500,000, and programs offered to parents are free. Over 100 people were served in 2022, with a target of over 500 people over the life of the project.				x	x	x		x
Twin Oaks Elementary School	The school offers loans or donations of devices (i.e., computers, tablets) to access the internet, and trains teachers of broadband skills and digital literacy.								X
Westside Works	Westside Works is a neighborhood-based workforce collaborative looking to transform the Westside community and Greater Metro Atlanta through increased digital skills development.						x		x
Wheeler County School District	The Wheeler County School District offers hotspots for families and devices for students as needed. The countywide program has a budget of between $50,000 and 99,999. It served up to 100 people in 2022 and is targeted to serve up to 500 people.							x	x
Whitfield County Senior Center	Community center offering resources for aging individuals in Dalton, Georgia.	x							

ISPs that participate in the ACP

The following table lists ISPs in the state (including mobile service providers) that participate in the ACP.[259] The table also indicates providers that offer a plan that provides service at effectively no cost with the application of the ACP subsidy ("no cost with ACP"), and whether the provider offers eligible customers the option to purchase a device at a discount.[260]

Table 42. ISPs participating in ACP (including no-cost plans and device discounts)

Provider name	Service type	No cost with ACP	Device discount
AFNET, LLC	Mobile Internet		Yes
Airtalk Wireless	Mobile Internet		Yes
Alma Telephone Co, Inc.	Home Internet		
Altamaha Fiber	Home Internet		
Althea - Hawk Networks, Inc.	Home Internet		Yes
American Assistance and Your Call Wireless	Mobile Internet		Yes
Assurance Wireless	Mobile Internet	Yes	
AT&T Mobility LLC	Mobile Internet	Yes	
AT&T	Home Internet	Yes	
AT&T	Mobile Internet	Yes	
blazinghog	Mobile Internet		
Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation	Home Internet		
Boftech	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Boomerang Wireless, LLC	Mobile Internet		Yes
Boost Mobile	Mobile Internet		Yes
Brightspeed	Home Internet		
Bulloch Solutions	Home Internet		
Cathect Communications, Inc	Home Internet		Yes
Cellspan Inc.	Mobile Internet		
Cintex Wireless, LLC	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
City Communications, Inc	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
City Communications, Inc	Home Internet	Yes	Yes
City of Thomasville	Home Internet		
Clear Wireless, LLC	Home Internet		Yes
Clear Wireless, LLC	Mobile Internet		Yes
CNSNext	Home Internet		
Coastal Electric Cooperative	Home Internet		
Comcast Xfinity	Home Internet	Yes	
Comcast Xfinity	Mobile Internet	Yes	

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[259] Based on data provided to USAC by service providers, available at https://cnm.universalservice.org/ (accessed September 6, 2023).
[260] Per USAC, customers must pay more than $10 but not more than $50 and must purchase the device through the provider; "Companies Near Me," USAC, https://cnm.universalservice.org/.

Provider name	Service type	No cost with ACP	Device discount
Comlink Total Solutions Corp	Mobile Internet		
ComSouth Telecommunications, Inc.	Home Internet		
ComSouth Telenet, Inc.	Home Internet		
Conexon Connect LLC	Home Internet		
Connect Us Wireless	Mobile Internet	Yes	
Cox Communication	Home Internet	Yes	Yes
Cricket Wireless	Mobile Internet	Yes	
Crossbeam	Home Internet		
CTC	Home Internet		
Culture Wireless	Home Internet		Yes
Culture Wireless	Mobile Internet		Yes
Dailytel Inc.	Mobile Internet		Yes
Dalton Utilities	Home Internet		
Darien Telephone Company, Inc	Home Internet		
Digital Aid, LLC	Mobile Internet		Yes
EARTHLINK, LLC	Home Internet		
Easy Wireless	Mobile Internet	Yes	
Echo Technologies	Home Internet		
ECOMOBILE, INC.	Home Internet		Yes
ECOMOBILE, INC.	Mobile Internet		Yes
Electric Power Board of Chattanooga	Home Internet		
Ellijay Telephone Company	Home Internet		
ETC Communications	Home Internet		
Excess Telecom, Inc.	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Flint Cable TV	Home Internet		
Forsyth CableNet	Home Internet		
Frontier Communications Corporation	Home Internet		
GAIA 5G	Home Internet	Yes	Yes
GAIA 5G	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Gen Mobile, Inc	Mobile Internet		Yes
GIGAFY	Home Internet		
Glenwood Telephone Company	Home Internet		
Global Connection Inc. of America	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
GO MD USA LLC	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Go Technology Management, LLC	Mobile Internet		Yes
Google Fiber Inc.	Home Internet		
GR8 CONNECT CORP.	Home Internet	Yes	Yes
GR8 CONNECT CORP.	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Hadodo Wireless	Mobile Internet		Yes
Hargray of Georgia, Inc.	Home Internet		
Hello Mobile Telecom LLC	Mobile Internet	Yes	
Heritage Wireless Group, Inc.	Mobile Internet		Yes
Hoop Wireless, LLC	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes

Provider name	Service type	No cost with ACP	Device discount
Hotwire Communication, Ltd.	Home Internet		
HTC	Home Internet		
Hughes Network Systems, LLC	Home Internet		
humanIT	Mobile Internet		Yes
IDT Domestic Telecom, Inc.	Mobile Internet		Yes
IgLou Internet Services	Home Internet		
IJ Wireless	Mobile Internet		Yes
IJ Wireless	Home Internet		Yes
Infiniti Mobile	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Insight Mobile, Inc.	Mobile Internet		Yes
Integrated Path Communications, LLC	Home Internet	Yes	
InterConnection	Mobile Internet		Yes
K20 Wireless	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Liberty Mobile Wireless	Mobile Internet		Yes
Life Wireless	Mobile Internet		Yes
Lingo	Home Internet		
LTE Wireless	Mobile Internet		Yes
Magnet Wireless	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Maxsip Telecom Corporation	Home Internet		
Mediacom LLC	Home Internet	Yes	
Metro by T-Mobile	Home Internet	Yes	
Metro by T-Mobile	Mobile Internet	Yes	
Metro Communications LLC	Home Internet		
NewPhone Wireless, LLC	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Nextab, LLC	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Nexus Telecom	Home Internet		Yes
Nexus Telecom	Mobile Internet		Yes
North American Local, LLC	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Omnipoint Technology Inc.	Mobile Internet		Yes
Paladin Wireless	Home Internet		
PCs for People	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Pembroke Telephone Company, Inc.	Home Internet	Yes	Yes
Pineland Telephone Cooperative, Inc.	Home Internet		
Plant Telephone Company	Home Internet		
Planters Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc	Home Internet		
Point Broadband Fiber Holding, LLC	Home Internet		
Progressive Rural Telephone Cooperative, Inc.	Home Internet		
Public Service Data	Home Internet		
Public Service Telephone Company	Home Internet		
Public Wireless, LLC	Home Internet		Yes
Q Link Wireless LLC	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Red Pocket & FreedomPop	Mobile Internet		Yes

Provider name	Service type	No cost with ACP	Device discount
Rogue Mobile Inc.	Mobile Internet		Yes
Rural4G	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
SafetyNet Wireless*	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Sage Telecom Communications, LLC	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Sano Health LLC	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Sarver Wireless	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Selectel Wireless	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
SLYTEL	Home Internet		
Snapfon	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Southern Fiber Worx, LLC	Home Internet		
Spectrum (Charter Communications Operating, LLC)	Home Internet	Yes	
Spot On Networks, LLC	Home Internet		
SprintFone	Home Internet		Yes
Straight Talk, Total Wireless, Simple Mobile, Walmart Family Mobile, TracFone, Net10, Page Plus & Go Smart	Mobile Internet		Yes
SWA CONNECT	Mobile Internet		Yes
Tablet Mobile	Mobile Internet		Yes
TDS Telecommunications Corporation	Home Internet		
Telispire, Affinity Cellular, Club Cellular, Flex Cellular	Home Internet	Yes	Yes
Tempo Telecom, Inc.	Mobile Internet		Yes
The Ringgold Telephone Company, Inc.	Home Internet		
Thrive Mobile	Mobile Internet		Yes
TM Telecomm Corp	Home Internet		Yes
TM Telecomm Corp	Mobile Internet		Yes
TNC Communications	Home Internet		Yes
TOAST.net Internet Service	Home Internet		
Tone Communication Services LLC	Mobile Internet		Yes
Torch Wireless	Mobile Internet		Yes
Trailwave Fiber, Inc.	Home Internet		
Tri-CoGo	Home Internet		
TruVista Communications, Inc. f/k/a The Chester Telephone Company	Home Internet	Yes	
Twigby	Mobile Internet		
U2 CONNECT NOW	Home Internet		
Unity Wireless Inc.	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Upward Mobile LLC	Mobile Internet		Yes
US Connect	Mobile Internet		Yes
Verizon Wireless	Mobile Internet		

Provider name	Service type	No cost with ACP	Device discount
Verizon Wireless	Home Internet		
Via Wireless, LLC	Mobile Internet		Yes
Viasat	Home Internet		
VOLT MOBILE INC.	Home Internet	Yes	Yes
VOLT MOBILE INC.	Mobile Internet	Yes	Yes
Vyve Broadband	Home Internet		
Waverly Hall Telephone, LLC	Home Internet		
WCFIBER	Home Internet		
Whoop Connect Inc.	Mobile Internet		Yes
Wilkes Telephone & Electric Company, Inc	Home Internet		
Windstream Communications, LLC	Home Internet		
Wireless Brands Co	Mobile Internet		Yes
WOW! Internet Cable and Phone	Home Internet		
Wrazzle, Inc.	Mobile Internet		Yes
Xchange Telecom LLC	Mobile Internet		Yes
Z1 Wireless	Mobile Internet		
Zito West Holding, LLC	Home Internet		
Zoom Telcom, LLC	Home Internet		
Ztar Mobile, Inc	Mobile Internet		Yes

Appendix B: Organizations with which GTA collaborated in developing the Plan

This appendix includes a review of GTA's outreach and engagement efforts and a listing of the partners and others who provided input and insights through a range of engagement mechanisms, including in-person meetings and online questionnaires, to inform this Plan.

In-person public listening sessions and other community engagements

GTA conducted 31 community engagement sessions throughout the state beginning in late winter 2023 with the purpose of sharing broadband and digital connectivity program/funding information and to hear directly from members of the public, organizations, and community leaders regarding individuals' and communities' needs and challenges in accessing and using the internet. Sessions included:

- 25 in-person "Let's Connect Georgia" sessions from February through June 2023 across Georgia's 12 planning regions

- Six virtual or audio sessions focused on covered populations and representative stakeholder organizations

Participants included state, county, and municipal government officials; regional planning commissions; technical colleges; universities; ISPs; industry, civic, and governance associations; local schools; regional and local libraries; regional and local housing authorities; regional and local nonprofits; digital connectivity organizations; organizations serving covered populations; and private citizens.

Stakeholder organization engagements

GTA conducted virtual sessions with expert stakeholders from governments, businesses, and statewide and community-based organizations including those representing covered populations. The sessions included:

- Workforce development organizations – including state agencies, technical colleges, workforce training organizations, labor unions, a fiber manufacturing company, industry associations, and ISPs

- ISPs – including Georgia Cable Association members, Georgia's Rural Telephone and Broadband Association members, the Georgia Electric Membership Corporation and member cooperatives, and other independent ISPs

- Local and regional governments – including regional planning commissions, state government officials, county government officials, and municipal government officials

- CAIs and organizations providing access to computing devices, digital literacy and financial training, and health-related services – including state, county, and municipal governments and education leaders; and digital connectivity organizations providing access to computing devices, digital literacy and financial training, and health-related services

In addition to these sessions, GTA engaged stakeholder organizations from March through June 2023 to complete surveys and asset inventories (see Appendix E), promoting these through the GTA website and during events, in the areas of:

- Workforce development – organizations' efforts to provide or facilitate job training in broadband-related fields

- Digital connectivity programs – organizations' efforts in any of the five pillars of digital connectivity

- CAIs – organizations' efforts to advance Georgians' opportunities to use broadband to work, learn, receive health care, and participate in social and civic events

- Agency asset inventory – infrastructure-related assets that a government entity owns or manages and broadband-related workforce development efforts in place

- Covered population barriers – identifies unique obstacles to broadband access faced by vulnerable populations an organization serves

- ISPs – identifies recruiting and hiring for broadband-related positions, broadband development strategies, and collaboration with communities to close the digital divide

For more details about GTA's stakeholder engagement and survey efforts, see the State of Georgia BEAD Five-Year Action Plan.

Organizations that provided planning input in meetings with GTA

Meeting name	Date	Organizations
AARP Tele-townhall	5/8/2023	AARP
Andrew College	4/18/2023	Andrew College
Atlanta Digital Connections Symposium	3/23/2023	
Black Chamber of Commerce	5/3/2023	Black Chamber of Commerce
Community Organizations Stakeholder Session	3/30/2023	Bank On Georgia; Diversity Cyber Council; Henry County Government; Jones County Family Connection; Macon Black tech; United Way of Southwest Georgia
Community	3/31/2023	Bank On Georgia; Compudopt; Healing Bridge Clinic;

Meeting name	Date	Organizations
Organizations Stakeholder Session		Outpost Plus; TechSmart for Seniors; United Way of Central Georgia
Digital Connectivity Advisory Committee Meetings	2/15/2023 3/30/2023 5/10/2023 6/13/2023 7/12/2023 8/8/2023 10/10/2023	Members provide advisory guidance to GTA on digital connectivity planning issues. Members include Georgia Public Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled, Morehouse College, Urban League of Greater Atlanta, Inspiredu, Verizon, Partnership for Inclusive Innovation, Urban League of Greater Atlanta, Partnership for Southern Equity, Georgia Assembly, Atlanta Housing, Georgia Department of Corrections, Office of Rural Education and Innovation, Georgia Department of Education, Georgia Piedmont Technical College, Georgia Municipal Association, Microsoft, PCs for People Georgia, AARP Georgia, Georgia Department of Corrections, GTBA-Georgia's Rural Telephone & Broadband Association, Georgia Department of Education
Digital Connectivity Public Listening Session – Columbus Technical College	2/20/2023	Columbus Technical College (part of Technical College System of Georgia); Georgia State Assembly; Muscogee County Democratic Committee; NAACP – Georgia State Conference; River Valley Regional Commission
Digital Connectivity Public Listening Session – Georgia Piedmont Technical College	3/22/2023	Black Churches 4 Digital Equity; DeKalb Neighborhood Association; Emory University Department of Emergency Medicine; FTE Leaders; Georgia Piedmont Technical College; Inspiritus; PCs for People; United Way Atlanta
Digital Connectivity Public Listening Session – Buck Melton Community Center	3/21/2023	AARP; Accelecom; Fort Valley State University; Macon-Bibb County Planning and Zoning; Macon-Bibb Economic Development Office; Macon City Mayor's Office; Macon Housing Authority; Macon Transit Authority; Meals on Wheels; Middle GA State University; Middle Georgia Regional Commission; PCs for People; Toomsboro City Mayor's Office; Tri-County EMC; United Way Central GA; City of Warner Robins Mayor's Office
Digital Connectivity Public Listening Session – Southeastern Technical College	3/20/2023	Altamaha EMC cooperative; Evans County schools; Georgia Department of Corrections; Glenwood Telco; Southeastern Technical College; T-Cubed Thoroughbred Technology and Telecommunications – Norfolk Southern Railroad; Toombs County schools; University of West Georgia; U.S. Congressman Rick Allen
Digital Connectivity Public Listening Session – Albany State University	3/16/2023	City of Albany fiber network; Albany State University; Albany Technical College; Connecting Kids; Dougherty County Commission; Dougherty County government; Dougherty County Public Library; Georgia Department Community Affairs; Georgia Department of Education – Rural Education and Innovation Office; Georgia Partnership for Telehealth; City of Meigs; Southwest Georgia Regional Commission; Sumter EMC; Turner

Meeting name	Date	Organizations
		County schools; U.S. Senator Warnock's Office;
Digital Connectivity Public Listening Session – Wiregrass Technical College	3/15/2023	Accord Technologies; Association of County Commissions of Georgia; Berrien County schools; Echols County public schools; Goodwill; Governor Kemp's Office; Lowndes County schools; South Georgia Regional Library; Thomas County schools; Valdosta City schools; Valdosta Times; Wiregrass Tech College
Digital Connectivity Public Listening Session – Georgia State Library Accessibility Conference	3/14/2023	Attendee organizations included: Georgia Public Library Service; Gwinnett County Public Libraries; National Federation of the Blind of Georgia; Okefenokee Regional Library System; Reburn County Public Library
Digital Connectivity Public Listening Session – Georgia Cyber Center	3/13/2023	Coastal Area Agency on Aging; Feiler Park Neighborhood; Live Oak Fiber; PAC Fiber; Pooler Chamber of Commerce; City of Savannah; Savannah Chatham Public School System; U.S. Congressman Rep. Buddy Carter
Digital Connectivity Public Listening Session – University of Georgia	3/9/2023	Accelecom; Athens Clarke County government; Charter Communications; Georgia Municipal Association; Habersham EMC; Relyant; Social Circle Schools; Trailways fiber; U.S. Department of Commerce, NTIA
Digital Connectivity Public Listening Session – Lake Spivey Recreation Center	3/8/2023	Bank On Georgia; Clayton County Board of Commissioners; Clayton County government; Clayton County Library; Culture Wireless; E-Community Fiber; Goodwill of North Georgia; Inspiredu; City of Morrow; Partnership for Southern Equity; PCs for People; Rural4g; U.S. Department of Commerce, NTIA; U.S. FDIC
Digital Connectivity Public Listening Session – Northwest GA Technical College	3/7/2023	Accelecom; BorderHawk; Calhoun Times; Chattooga County School District; Comcast; Dade County schools; Gordon County schools; Northwest Georgia Regional Commission; Northwest Georgia Technical College; Rome Floyd Chamber of Commerce; Thrive Regional Partnership; Walker County Government
Digital Connectivity Public Listening Session – North Hall Community Center	3/6/2023	Hall County Government
Digital Connectivity Public Listening Session – Spout Springs Library	3/6/2023	Charter Communications; Hall County library; Hall County schools; Kajeet; Piedmont regional library; Verizon
Digital Connectivity Public Listening Session – Augusta GA Cyber Center	2/23/2023	AARP; Accelecom; The Clubhouse/Tech for Success; Comcast; Georgia Library System Blind and Disabled Services; U.S. Congressman Rick Allen
Digital Connectivity Public Listening Session – Southern Crescent Technical College	2/22/2023	Central Georgia EMC; Georgia Department of Community Affairs; City of Griffin fiber network; City of Griffin schools; Griffin Spalding schools; Town of Sharpsburg; Spalding County government; Southern Crescent Technical College

Meeting name	Date	Organizations
Eastman-Dodge Chamber of Commerce	4/11/2023	Eastman-Dodge Chamber of Commerce
Education Stakeholder Session – Bartow County	3/28/2023	Bank On Georgia; Bartow County School System; Georgia Department of Education; We thrive on Riverside Renters Association
Education Stakeholder Session – Jones County	3/29/2023	Georgia Department of Education; Georgia Department of Education – Technology Services; Jones County Board of Education
Family Connections Partnership	4/17/2023	Family Connections
Family Connections Region 6	5/16/2023	Family Connections
GA Internet for All Meeting with NTIA	4/14/2023	
Internet Service Provider Stakeholder Session	3/17/2023	Charter Communications; Comcast; Cox Communications; Georgia Cable Association; Mediacom
Internet Service Provider Stakeholder Session	3/10/2023	AT&T
Internet Service Provider Stakeholder Session – GTBA	4/13/2023	GTBA – Georgia's Rural Telephone and Broadband Association and members
Internet Service Provider Stakeholder Session	4/13/2023	Windstream
Internet Service Provider Stakeholder Session	5/4/2023	Canoochee EMC; Carroll EMC; Central Georgia EMC; Coastal Electric Cooperative; Diverse Power; Flint EMC; Georgia Electric Membership Corporation (EMC); Georgia System Operations Corporation; Grady EMC; Habersham EMC; Irwin EMC; Jackson EMC; Middle Georgia EMC; Mitchell EMC; Oconee EMC; Satilla REMC; Slash Pine EMC; Sumter EMC; Trailwave Fiber; Washington EMC
Local and Regional Government Stakeholder Session	3/24/2023	City of Albany; Bleckley County; Carl Vincent Institute of Government – UGA; City of Calhoun; City of Calhoun City Council; Candler County Board of Commissioners; Chatham County; Cobb County Government; City of Dublin; City of Fort Gaines; Georgia Department of Corrections; City of LaFayette; Macon-Bibb Commission; Macon-Bibb County Board of Tax Assessors; Madison County Board of Commissioners; Middle Georgia Regional Commission Area Agency on Aging; Montgomery County Board of Commissioners; River Edge Behavioral Health Center; City of Shady Dale; Southwest Georgia Regional Commission; Statham Mayor's Office; City of Thomasville; Three Rivers Regional Commission; City of Tucker; UGA; City of Woodstock

Meeting name	Date	Organizations
Local and Regional Government Stakeholder Session	3/27/2023	City of Arlington; City of Atlanta; City of Augusta; Bank On Georgia; City of Clarkston; City of Climax; Town of Cohutta; City of College Park; De Soto Trail Regional Library; Dooly County Chamber; Evans County; City of Fort Gaines; Georgia Department of Community Affairs; City of Glennville; Johnson County; City of LaFayette; City of Loganville; Madison County Board of Commissioners; City of Metter/Georgia Grown Innovation Center; City of Molena; City of Norcross; Pulaski County Commission; Three Rivers Regional Commission; City of Tucker; City of Waynesboro; Whitesburg City Hall; City of Woodstock
National Coalition on Adult Basic Education (CABE) Conference	4/4/2023	
National Summit on State Planning for Digital Equity and Economic Inclusion	4/27/2023	
Digital Connectivity Public Listening Session	6/15/2023	Paine College
Rural Healthcare Access	5/10/2023	
Stakeholder Meeting – Covington	5/25/2023	Community Members
Workforce Development Stakeholder Session	2/17/2023	OFS, a fiber manufacturer headquartered in Norcross, GA
Workforce Development Stakeholder Session	2/24/2023	ATC Broadband; BTC Telecom; Bulloch Solutions; Charter Communications; Comcast; ETC Now; Fiber Broadband Association; Fiber Network Alliance; FTC (Farmers Telephone Cooperative); Georgia Department of Labor; Georgia EMC; Georgia Telecommunications Association; Hart Telephone Company; Highline; OFS; PAC Fiber; Pineland Telco; Relyant Communications; TDS Telecom; Technical Association of Georgia; Truvista; Workforce Evolved; WOW
Workforce Development Stakeholder Session	3/3/2023	AT&T; Communications Workers of America; Fiber Optic Association; Georgia Department of Education; OFS; Southeast Lineman Training Center
Clayton County Digital Equity Youth Empowerment Summit	10/7/2023	Members of the public
Digital Connectivity Roundtable - Justice Impacted Community	10/23/23	Georgia Department of Corrections, Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, Women on the Rise, Reform Alliance, members of the public
South GA Regional Digital	10/24/2023	City of Valdosta; Lower Muscogee Tribe, Ware County

Meeting name	Date	Organizations
Connectivity Action Planning Meeting		Schools, United Way, Clinch Memorial Hospital, RoseNet, Live Oak, City of Meigs, Echols County Schools, Lowndes County Schools, Southern Georgia Regional Commission, Goodwill Industries of the Southern River Inc., Ware County, Great Valdosta United Way, ATC Broadband, GTA, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, Southern Georgia Regional Libraries, Albany State University (student), Alpha Tech Solutions LLC., Northwest Georgia Housing Authority, Georgia ABC, members of the public
Thrive Tri-state Summit – North GA Digital Connectivity Action Planning Meeting	11/1/2023 – 11/2/2023	Members of the public
Middle Georgia Regional Digital Connectivity Action Planning Meeting	11/9/2023	Fort Valley State University, Macon Housing Authority, River Valley Regional Commission, Jones County School System, Middle Georgia State University, Georgia Department of Corrections, WIN Learning, Charter, Cochran-Bleckley County, Macon-Bibb County, Economic Opportunity for Savannah-Chatham County, Inc., Middle Georgia Regional Library, Georgia Public Library Service, Culture Wireless, Public Service Communications, Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc., members of the public
College Digital Connectivity Session	11/10/2023	Members of the public
Statewide Digital Connectivity Symposium	11/14/2023	IBM, Culture Wireless, Wellstar Health System, Clayton County Community Services Authority, Office of Senator Warnock, Comcast, University System of Georgia, Georgia Department of Corrections, Alegna Technologies Inc., M.E.N.S Wear Inc., PCs for People, Georgia Municipal Association, Georgia Department of Education, Fulton County, Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Atlanta Technical College, Guide House, GTA, River Valley Regional Commission, City of Atlanta, Compudopt, Urban League of Greater Atlanta, Kajeet, Georgia Community Action Association, Cyber Defense International, Georgia Public Library Service, Career Rise Atlanta, Tech Smart Seniors, Georgia Department of Labor, Morehouse School of Medicine, Foresite Group, CEBOT, Cox, STEM Atlanta Women, Stem Funders Network, Spelman College, Boys2Men & Girls2Win, Columbia County, Norvet MSP, CTC, NPursuitCareers, Georgia Tech, University of Georgia, Diversified Technology LLC., Technologists of Color, Sand Cherry Associates, Charter, EducationSuperHighway, Kyndryl, Fort Valley State University, Laing Media, Dekalb County, SafePC Solutions/Safe PC Cloud, UnderGrid

Meeting name	Date	Organizations
		Networks, Association County Commissioners of Georgia, Lead For America, United Way, AT&T, Verizon, Google, Keller Williams Realty, Georgia Geospatial Information Office, Catholic Charities Atlanta, Diversity Cyber Council, Stand 8, Live Oak Fiber, hausofkelley, Inspiredu, Goodwill of North Georgia, Guidehouse, Office of Senator Ossoff, Amazon, Dokun Technologies, Atlanta Regional Commission, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, State of Utah, Economic Opportunity for Savannah-Chatham County, Inc., Westchester Services LLC, T-Cubed, Communications Workers of America, City of Morrow, AARP, Delta Community Credit Union, and members of the public

Organizations that provided digital connectivity input to GTA via online surveys

GTA covered populations survey respondents

Organization
AARP Georgia
Banks/Habersham County Extension
Barnesville, city of
Buford City Schools
Chattooga County Extension
Cherokee Regional Library
CJ Hicks Elementary School
Cohutta, town of
Columbus Technical College
Dade County Schools
Dawson County Board of Education
Dodge Connection-Communities In Schools (CIS) of Dodge County, Inc.
Dodge County
Elbert County Cooperative Extension
Emanuel County 4-H
Empower Southwest Georgia
Evans County Extension
Everlasting Vessels Inc.
Fulton County Cooperative Extension
Georgia Department of Corrections
Georgia Department of Education
Georgia Public Library Service
Gilmer County Board of Education

Organization
Grady County School District
Hancock County 4-H Club
Houston County Extension
Inspiredu
Lakeland, city of
Meigs, city of
Norwood, city of
Partnership for Inclusive Innovation
Partnership for Southern Equity
PCs for People
Polk School District
Pulaski County Commission
Reynolds, city of
Santa Claus, city of
Sharpsburg, town of
UGA Cooperative Extension
UGA EFNEP (Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program)
UGA Extension – Bryan County
UGA Extension – Glynn County
UGA Extension – Gwinnett County
UGA Extension – Laurens County
UGA Extension – Northeast District
UGA Extension – Paulding County
UGA Extension – Walker Country
University of Georgia (UGA)
Wilcox County Extension/4-H

GTA CAI survey respondents

Organization
Barnesville, city of
Buford City Schools
Cohutta, town of
Columbus Technical College
Dade County Schools
Decatur Christian Towers
Dodge Connection-Communities In Schools of Dodge County, Inc.
Empower Southwest Georgia
Everlasting Vessels Inc.
Fort Gaines, city of
Fort Valley State University
Georgia Department of Corrections
Georgia Department of Education

Organization
Georgia Public Library Service
Gilmer County Board of Education
Goodwill Industries Southern Rivers
Goodwill of North Georgia
Grady County School District
Inspiredu
Madison County Board of Education
Pataula Charter Academy
Piedmont Regional Library System
Polk Family Connection
Pooler Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau
Reynolds, city of
Rogers State Prison
Santa Claus, city of
Seminole County School
Sharpsburg, town of
Twin Oaks Elementary School
University of Georgia (UGA)
Washington State Prison, Georgia Department of Corrections

GTA digital connectivity program inventory survey respondents

Organization
Adtell Integration
Adrian, city of
Alma Police Department
AT&T
Barnesville, city of
Bibb County School District
Buford City Schools
Carroll County Schools
Charter Communications
Cohutta, town of
Columbus Technical College
Compudopt
Cook County Schools
Dade County Schools
Dawson County Board of Education
Dillard, city of
Dodge Connection Communities In Schools of Dodge County, Inc.
Dodge County
Dogwood Gardens Senior Living
Echols County Schools

Organization
Emory University School of Medicine
Evans County Charter School System
Everlasting Vessels Inc.
Gainesville City Schools
Georgia Council on Aging
Georgia Department of Corrections
Georgia Municipal Association
Georgia Public Library Service
Gilmer County Board of Education
Goodwill of North Georgia
Grady County School District
Graham, city of
Hagan, city of
Houston County Board of Education
Inspiredu
Lakeland, city of
Loganville, city of
Macon Housing Authority
Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority
McDuffie County Board of Education
Meigs, city of
Northwest Georgia Housing Authority
Norwood, city of
Pataula Charter Academy
Pelham City Schools
Pickens County Schools
Piedmont Regional Library System
Pierce County School District
Register, town of
Relyant Communications
River Valley Regional Commission
Santa Claus, city of
Savannah-Chatham Public School System
Seminole County School
Sharpsburg, town of
Sumter County Board of Commissioners
Terrell County Board of Education
Thrive Regional Partnership
University of Georgia Cooperative Extension
Vienna, city of
Wheeler County School District
Zebulon, city of

GTA government agency asset inventory survey respondents

Organization
Barnesville, city of
Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia
Buford City Schools
Cohutta, town of
Dodge County Board of Commissioners
Georgia Department of Education
Georgia Department of Public Safety
Georgia Department of Transportation
Georgia Public Library Service
Georgia Technology Authority
Lakeland, city of
Reynolds, city of
Santa Claus, city of
Sharpsburg, town of
State Properties Commission
Technical College System of Georgia

GTA ISP survey respondents

Organization
Adtell Integration
AT&T
Charter Communications
Comcast
Cox Communications
ETC (Ellijay Telephone Company)
Family Connection of Turner County
Frank Callen Boys & Girls Club
Glenwood Telephone Company
Hart Telephone Company
Highline
Mediacom
Montgomery State Prison, Georgia Department of Corrections
Open Broadband, LLC
Paladin Wireless, LLC
Pineland Telephone Cooperative
Relyant Communications
Rogers State Prison, Georgia Department of Corrections
Southeast Lineman Training Center
SWA Connect
TDS
Tri-CoGo

GTA workforce development opportunity survey respondents

Organization
Adtell – The Fiber School (Adtell Integration)
Adtell Integration
AT&T
Bibb County School District
Buford City Schools
Carroll County School System
Columbus Technical College
Communications Workers of America
Cook County Schools
Dublin City Schools
ETC (Ellijay Telephone Company)
Evans County Charter School System
Everlasting Vessels Inc.
Fiber Broadband Association
Gainesville City Schools
Georgia Department of Corrections
Georgia Department of Education
Georgia Piedmont Technical College
Georgia Public Library Service
Global / Georgia Partnership for TeleHealth, Inc.
Goodwill Industries Southern Rivers
Goodwill of North Georgia
Hart Telephone Company
Pelham City Schools
Pembroke Advanced Communications (PAC Fiber)
Piedmont Regional Library System
Pineland Telephone Cooperative
Relyant Communications
River Valley Regional Commission
Savannah-Chatham Public School System
SLTC (Southeast Lineman Training Center)
South Georgia Regional Library
Southeastern Technical College
Southwest Georgia Regional Commission
Spectrum Southeast, LLC
Technology Association of Georgia (TAG)
Terrell County Board of Education
World Education

Appendix C: County digital connectivity data

GTA has collected county-based data for digital connectivity factors for each of Georgia's 159 counties. Table 43 highlights key indicators per county, including broadband availability, digital divide score, lacking computer, poverty, work from home, and median income. To access the full table, see the following Google Docs link: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ihja-BWfs55p2py7FYjIGcEApPBHbKYHB_qtCq3x8gk/edit#gid=53095830.

See Table 44 below for an explanation of data fields.

<div align="center">Table 43. County digital connectivity data</div>

County	Total Population	Broadband Availability (Unserved)	Digital Divide Score	Lacking computer	Poverty	Work From Home	Median Income
Appling County	18,386	15%	37.23	11.00%	25.40%	5.60%	$51,422.00
Atkinson County	8,165	2%	37.64	15.80%	26.90%	2.20%	$37,318.00
Bacon County	11,164	10%	35.12	14.20%	24.50%	8.60%	$35,830.00
Baker County	3,038	91%	50.31	30.30%	25.10%	4.90%	$41,985.00
Baldwin County	43,781	4%	25.5	20.70%	22.60%	14.20%	$70,756.00
Banks County	19,234	24%	31.51	12.70%	13.20%	8.80%	$65,746.00
Barrow County	83,240	1%	14.68	5.70%	10.50%	4.60%	$35,660.00
Bartow County	107,738	4%	16.56	6.70%	12%	8.40%	$38,232.00
Ben Hill County	16,700	8%	32.4	12.70%	25.60%	12.00%	$40,045.00
Berrien County	19,397	19%	33.77	16.40%	21.10%	6.00%	$47,816.00
Bibb County	153,159	1%	42.9	10.30%	51.10%	3.60%	$34,883.00
Bleckley County	12,873	19%	31.06	12.50%	18%	2.30%	$35,957.00
Brantley County	19,109	1%	28.19	7.60%	16.80%	7%	$40,549.00
Brooks County	15,457	26%	35.47	17.20%	23.10%	2.30%	$38,357.00
Bryan County	39,627	1%	12.52	5.60%	8.80%	11.90%	$75,021.00
Bulloch County	79,608	1%	19.65	6%	22.50%	3%	$40,361.00
Burke County	22,383	38%	27.14	10.40%	15.40%	5.00%	$47,859.00
Butts County	24,936	4%	29.54	11.00%	19.10%	4.60%	$50,696.00
Calhoun County	6,189	56%	40.79	18.70%	26.10%	4.60%	$39,008.00
Camden County	54,666	6%	14.13	4.50%	16%	18.20%	$82,820.00
Candler County	10,803	1%	36.68	15.30%	24.90%	7.20%	$52,090.00
Carroll County	119,992	4%	21.68	8.40%	17.30%	9.50%	$66,162.00
Catoosa County	67,580	2%	16.1	7.90%	8.70%	2.40%	$42,646.00
Charlton County	13,392	14%	35.11	13.80%	21.30%	2.20%	$42,461.00

County	Total Population	Broadband Availability (Unserved)	Digital Divide Score	Lacking computer	Poverty	Work From Home	Median Income
Chatham County	289,430	2%	18	5.30%	14.30%	2.50%	$46,051.00
Chattahoochee County	10,907	51%	17.29	9.70%	17.80%	4.90%	$43,270.00
Chattooga County	24,789	11%	38.86	16.80%	21.50%	9.70%	$76,577.00
Cherokee County	258,773	1%	9.09	3.10%	7%	2.80%	$38,817.00
Clarke County	128,331	1%	17.75	5.50%	25.90%	4.30%	$54,921.00
Clay County	2,834	39%	42.56	10.60%	25.70%	1.20%	$42,539.00
Clayton County	292,256	1%	13.45	5.70%	16.40%	8.40%	$71,366.00
Clinch County	6,618	19%	41.6	19.90%	30.20%	7.90%	$46,977.00
Cobb County	760,141	1%	6.71	2.10%	8.60%	6.90%	$61,527.00
Coffee County	43,273	9%	31.87	12%	22.20%	2.00%	$38,091.00
Colquitt County	45,600	10%	31.35	12.10%	23.80%	4.70%	$41,505.00
Columbia County	156,714	2%	10.9	5%	6.90%	1.80%	$42,960.00
Cook County	17,270	18%	29.32	14.60%	20.50%	3.80%	$44,106.00
Coweta County	148,509	2%	12.83	4.60%	8.50%	2.70%	$42,567.00
Crawford County	12,404	1%	33.93	11.20%	13.60%	3.20%	$44,084.00
Crisp County	22,372	19%	37.31	15.10%	26.20%	15.30%	$87,532.00
Dade County	16,116	2%	25.33	12.20%	9.80%	3.50%	$44,685.00
Dawson County	26,108	10%	18.07	4.80%	9.70%	5.10%	$44,597.00
Decatur County	26,404	18%	34.85	21%	21%	4.90%	$37,477.00
DeKalb County	759,297	1%	11.69	5.30%	13.50%	3.60%	$46,565
Dodge County	20,605	28%	36.4	16.50%	20.90%	2.70%	$45,061.00
Dooly County	13,390	8%	42.66	20.60%	22.60%	11.50%	$38,497.00
Dougherty County	87,956	2%	26.55	11.10%	25.70%	2.70%	$47,382.00
Douglas County	146,343	1%	11.79	4.80%	12.20%	10%	$49,125.00
Early County	10,190	46%	44.57	27.60%	25%	1.80%	$39,863.00
Echols County	4,006	99%	48.5	32.40%	25.40%	2.50%	$44,485.00
Effingham County	64,296	2%	14.44	5.20%	7.60%	3.10%	$48,717

County	Total Population	Broadband Availability (Unserved)	Digital Divide Score	Lacking computer	Poverty	Work From Home	Median Income
Elbert County	19,194	5%	42.58	21.30%	23.50%	5.30%	$35,664.00
Emanuel County	22,646	1%	37.46	13.00%	24.90%	2.3	$46,799.00
Evans County	10,654	14%	33.27	12.70%	23.70%	3.10%	$41,847.00
Fannin County	26,188	21%	32.98	10.80%	11.6	3.70%	$49,557.00
Fayette County	114,421	1%	10.93	3.10%	5.40%	5.30%	$71,609.00
Floyd County	98,498	5%	24.72	9.50%	18.70%	1.30%	$40,303.00
Forsyth County	244,252	1%	6.77	1.90%	5.30%	3.60%	$40,936.00
Franklin County	23,349	21%	33.87	12.30%	19%	3.10%	$46,475.00
Fulton County	1,063,937	1%	9.83	4.80%	13%	2.80%	$47,905.00
Gilmer County	31,369	19%	33.27	10.60%	15.10%	3.10%	$41,030.00
Glascock County	2,971	97%	38.22	16.30%	15.60%	2.50%	$45,594.00
Glynn County	85,292	1%	24.09	9.30%	16.80%	8.50%	$65,261.00
Gordon County	57,963	2%	27	10.20%	16.10%	4.20%	$50,154.00
Grady County	24,633	17%	35.99	14.70%	17.50%	6.80%	$53,786.00
Greene County	18,324	8%	30.62	13.70%	14.80%	5.00%	$44,225.00
Gwinnett County	936,250	1%	7.7	3.10%	10.60%	5.30%	$55,601.00
Habersham County	45,328	3%	25.41	13%	12.90%	2.30%	$42,171.00
Hall County	204,441	2%	19.27	5.80%	14%	1.60%	$36,708.00
Hancock County	8,457	68%	56.74	30.30%	29.10%	3.20%	$56,973
Haralson County	29,792	4%	26.77	9.60%	11.40%	2.50%	$38,449.00
Harris County	35,236	18%	18.61	4.60%	6.10%	5.00%	$52,902.00
Hart County	26,205	4%	31.3	9.60%	14.90%	8.20%	$39,717.00
Heard County	11923	26%	37.06	14.70%	20.40%	5.50%	$45,252.00
Henry County	234,561	1%	8.25	3.60%	8.90%	1.40%	$45,253.00
Houston County	157,863	1%	14.31	5.70%	10.50%	3.00%	$41,593.00
Irwin County	9,416	15%	32.34	17.90%	20.90%	7.30%	$68,057.00
Jackson County	72,977	6%	18.51	6.60%	9.70%	3.40%	$47,229.00

County	Total Population	Broadband Availability (Unserved)	Digital Divide Score	Lacking computer	Poverty	Work From Home	Median Income
Jasper County	14,219	41%	31.64	13.50%	16.20%	1.30%	$41,917.00
Jeff Davis County	15,115	13%	31.41	13.20%	21.20%	8.60%	$47,651.00
Jefferson County	15,362	21%	37.82	16.60%	18.20%	12.90%	$92,319.00
Jenkins County	8,676	32%	39.42	17.10%	27.90%	1.70%	$37,703.00
Johnson County	9,643	43%	41.96	21.40%	19.50%	2.30%	$43,065.00
Jones County	28,735	4%	21.25	8.10%	14.20%	6.80%	$42,866.00
Lamar County	19,077	14%	23.2	8.10%	12.50%	6.10%	$53,105.00
Lanier County	10,423	18%	31.58	17.50%	34.10%	6.20%	$60,685.00
Laurens County	47,546	17%	36.56	19.60%	25%	1.90%	$44,995
Lee County	29,992	16%	14.17	4.90%	9.90%	2.50%	$40,856.00
Liberty County	61,435	4%	16.4	5.30%	16.80%	0.70%	$44,799.00
Lincoln County	7,921	1%	46.67	25.60%	18.50%	1.90%	$55,933.00
Long County	19,559	8%	21.76	3.90%	18.40%	4.50%	$47,618.00
Lowndes County	117,406	18%	20.3	11%	22.90%	6.90%	$55,826.00
Lumpkin County	33,610	10%	20.31	8.50%	12.10%	7.10%	$61,471.00
Macon County	12,947	1%	46.22	22.60%	27.30%	2.00%	$50,080.00
Madison County	29,880	14% Unserved	31.12	9.50%	22.10%	1.90%	$42,241.00
Marion County	8,359	10%	41.11	21.50%	13.50%	3.20%	$44,540
McDuffie County	21,312	27%	31.2	13.60%	16.90%	1.20%	$47,140.00
McIntosh County	14,378	1%	36.07	11%	19.70%	3.40%	$48,943.00
Meriwether County	21167	44%	40.96	19%	21.90%	6.40%	$44,814.00
Miller County	5,718	23%	42.78	28.90%	22.70%	6.10%	$53,369.00
Mitchell County	21,863	41%	35.19	12.90%	26.50%	6.90%	$47,789.00
Monroe County	27,578	1%	24.23	7.50%	14.50%	2.50%	$51,770.00
Montgomery County	9,172	7%	29.77	9.10%	17%	6.10%	$87,281.00
Morgan County	19,276	17%	21.83	8.70%	6.50%	1.00%	$46,530.00
Murray County	40,096	5%	27.38	12.20%	15.10%	8.10%	$63,482.00

County	Total Population	Broadband Availability (Unserved)	Digital Divide Score	Lacking computer	Poverty	Work From Home	Median Income
Muscogee County	195,769	1%	20.9	8.90%	19.50%	6.20%	$59,894.00
Newton County	111,744	2%	16.52	5.60%	13.60%	1.20%	$42,192.00
Oconee County	40,280	6%	10.89	2.80%	4.70%	4.70%	$59,685.00
Oglethorpe County	15,259	13%	29	14.60%	10.60%	8.90%	$85,182.00
Paulding County	168,667	2%	7.8	4.30%	6.50%	9.00%	$89,632.00
Peach County	27,546	1%	40.8	12.30%	28.70%	4.40%	$46,314.00
Pickens County	32,591	8%	24.71	6.50%	12.60%	5.70%	$67,646.00
Pierce County	19,465	24%	27.48	5.70%	17.90%	6.10%	$61,509.00
Pike County	18962	39%	21.76	6.70%	8.50%	4.00%	$76,546.00
Polk County	42,613	6%	30.1	9.70%	18.10%	21.80%	$120,919.00
Pulaski County	11,137	13%	35.31	10.10%	17.50%	3.80%	$49,061.00
Putnam County	22,119	17%	28.88	7.20%	17.70%	5.60%	$57,187.00
Quitman County	2,299	50%	58.42	35.10%	18.90%	0.00%	$40,947.00
Rabun County	17,137	13%	37.27	11.70%	16.90%	3.00%	$65,697.00
Randolph County	6,778	26%	36.79	15.10%	30.70%	5.20%	$87,334.00
Richmond County	202,518	1%	24.97	9.00%	2.10%	7.00%	$54,442.00
Rockdale County	90,896	1%	14.04	5.10%	11.90%	3.30%	$43,154.00
Schley County	5,257	17%	27.76	14.10%	17.30%	5.20%	$61,354.00
Screven County	13,966	1%	33	17.80%	17.30%	8.70%	$73,839.00
Seminole County	8,090.00	10%	40.47	20.50%	24.80%	6%	$59,149.00
Spalding County	66,703	4%	25.56	12.10%	17.40%	4.70%	$57,215.00
Stephens County	25,925	7%	30.71	12.50%	13.50%	6.00%	$80,911.00
Stewart County	6,621	70%	45.65	17.70%	26.40%	6.20%	$55,987.00
Sumter County	29,524	28%	28.43	10.30%	24.20%	5.40%	$56,053.00
Talbot County	6,195	16%	42.15	20.40%	16.80%	8.00%	$67,604.00
Taliaferro County	1,537	2%	48.72	26.00%	21.30%	3.40%	$76,626.00

County	Total Population	Broadband Availability (Unserved)	Digital Divide Score	Lacking computer	Poverty	Work From Home	Median Income
Tattnall County	25,286	13%	33.26	12.90%	20.10%	15.40%	$96,997.00
Taylor County	8,020	1%	45.16	17.90%	28.70%	8.90%	$72,486.00
Telfair County	15,860	26%	48.39	33.10%	26.20%	3.80%	$46,404.00
Terrell County	8,531	24%	39.51	18.60%	30.10%	3.80%	$56,526.00
Thomas County	44,451	18%	24.61	9.50%	17.20%	6.10%	$47,909.00
Tift County	40,644	8%	30.58	19%	22.10%	3.80%	$53,297.00
Toombs County	26,830	10%	33.68	12.50%	20.10%	2.30%	$42,974.00
Towns County	12,037	3%	30.75	11.30%	14.20%	15.10%	$112,581.00
Treutlen County	6,901	40%	48.51	20.30%	32.10%	8.30%	$48,045.00
Troup County	69,992	6%	25.87	12.20%	19.10%	0.50%	$51,688.00
Turner County	7,985	21%	38.08	17.60%	27.20%	3.3	$50,379.00
Twiggs County	8,120	32%	40.26	22.40%	15.70%	5.80%	$57,970
Union County	24,511	10%	34.57	12.60%	14.90%	11.60%	$72,539
Upson County	26,320	4%	32.52	12.20%	22.40%	4.4	$75,668.00
Walker County	69,761	4%	24.39	10.00%	13.80%	2.70%	$49,175.00
Walton County	94,593	3%	20.19	6.20%	11.50%	8.90%	$58,463.00
Ware County	35,734	14%	30.98	8.70%	23.80%	7.60%	$60,485.00
Warren County	5,254	47%	50.23	23.20%	27.40%	5.60%	$64,077
Washington County	20,374	19%	33.92	16.80%	18.20%	6.30%	$62,472.00
Wayne County	29,927	17%	29.71	11.40%	18.80%	8.80%	$47,810.00
Webster County	2,607	53%	39.44	18.40%	29.40%	5.30%	$64,245.00
Wheeler County	7,855	36%	50.36	43.80%	23%	9.10%	76,903
White County	30,798	4%	26.6	16.30%	12%	2.00%	$48,076.00
Whitfield County	104,628	0%	23.7	10.60%	15.10%	8.70%	$61,473.00
Wilcox County	8,635	40%	38.84	25.20%	26%	6.40%	$64,054.00
Wilkes County	9,777	1%	57.53	41.70%	25.70%	8.20%	$59,494.00
Wilkinson County	8,954	17%	36.42	20.10%	26%	5.50%	$51,810.00
Worth County	20,247	23%	28.91	9.10%	18.50%	8.80%	$54,446.00

Table 44. County digital connectivity data sources for Table 43

Data	Data Source
Total population of the county	Digital Equity Act Population Viewer
Percentage of unserved broadband locations - Percentage of households with home internet service with speeds less than 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload) or no home internet service	Digital Equity Act Population Viewer
Digital divide score	Digital Divide Index
Percentage lacking a computer	Digital Divide Index
Percentage in poverty	Digital Divide Index
Median income	ACCESS Broadband Dashboard
Work from Home	ACCESS Broadband Dashboard

Appendix D: Needs assessment discussion

Covered population needs assessment

For covered populations, broadband access is a key issue. In a 2023 survey conducted for the development of this Plan, representatives from organizations serving covered populations as defined by NTIA were asked if households they serve have access to "some type" of internet service at home. Out of 57 respondents, only 14 agreed or strongly agreed. 22 were neutral, and 21 disagreed or strongly disagreed. When asked whether households had more than one choice of provider for "high-speed, reliable, and affordable broadband," respondents were more emphatic: 39 of 57 either disagreed or strongly disagreed, 8 were neutral, and 10 agreed.

According to the State's broadband map and other internal data sources that reflect service availability, areas that are currently shown as unserved and underserved also have a lack of digital connectivity programs—as well as a significant number of covered populations. This correlation means that increasing digital connectivity programs in these areas can help address the digital divide and further the State's policy and service goals by helping improve educational outcomes, health outcomes, and employment opportunities for individuals in these areas.

According to stakeholder outreach conducted for the development of this Plan, residents in rural areas of Georgia struggle not only with accessing internet service at home, but also with limited connectivity in CAIs—both of which compound gaps in digital literacy. Meanwhile, many rural communities prioritize delivering broadband access and are not focused on developing digital connectivity (equity) programs. According to stakeholders, individuals in these areas have few such programs available in nearby communities and are not catered to by applicable programs in more urban and suburban areas.

Stakeholders report that the lack of connectivity in rural areas particularly impacts the ability of individuals with disabilities to access state library content and programs, as well as making it more difficult for seniors in these areas to access benefit programs which are offered online.

In areas where service is available, residents may face other barriers to digital connectivity. Affordability is a particular concern for some individuals who live in low-income households, who can be faced with a high cost for inadequate service.

Many Georgia residents who are members of covered populations lack access to digital training, according to a 2023 online survey of organizations serving covered populations. GTA conducted the survey in the development of this Plan. Of 55 organizations responding, only one organization felt that the population they covered had access to "convenient and comprehensive digital literacy training."

Many residents could benefit from online safety training, a key component of digital literacy coursework. Of the 50 organizations that expressed an opinion regarding Georgia residents' cybersecurity capabilities, only three agreed that individuals know how to protect their information online or that they can recognize a phishing scam or other types of scams and illegal activity.

Only four organizations stated that the populations they serve take the basic step of using anti-virus and anti-malware software on their computers.

The State intends to work with partner organizations that have established digital literacy training programs, as well as potential new programs, to mitigate the digital literacy gaps among covered populations and other residents.

Stakeholders also noted that only libraries in certain counties have devices that assist with accessibility for individuals with disabilities.

The following table lists barriers identified by representatives of organizations serving covered populations in their responses to the Covered Population Barriers Survey. As many organizations serve multiple covered populations and barriers identified are intersectional, responses are grouped by the subject matter of the question to which they were given.

Table 45. Barriers to covered populations identified by community organizations

Survey question	Barriers identified
General barriers to access	Availability, particularly in rural areas: • Stakeholders from the following counties specifically mentioned issues due to rural/remote location: Polk, Glynn, Laurens, Grady, Elbert, Terrell, Randolph, Steward, Clay, Schley, Marion, Calhoun, Hancock, Chattooga, Muscogee, and Walker. • "Rural areas don't have the access. There are parts of Georgia where you cannot get a cellular signal." • "They are limited in choices and access to reliable, affordable high speed internet services." • "Many of our prisons are in rural areas where internet connectivity is limited." • "If they don't have it in their homes, there may be issues with transportation to get to a location that does provide the service, how to use the service may also be an issue." • "Students outside of Muscogee County often have very limited access to effective broadband connections. Many of our students, even in Muscogee County, are not able to afford reliable, high-speed broadband connectivity other than on their

Survey question	Barriers identified
	telephones. This makes online learning courses and access to college online resource challenging for them." • "There are dead spots in Walker County for Internet. High speed internet is not affordable and anything less doesn't cover all of the data needs of the household." • "Workers perform all their field activities/work in the field, orchards, outdoors and have difficulty to access internet or limited provider or expensive internet options. no resources available in their language." Reliability: • "The service is so slow that we cannot have more than one device on the service. Downloads for movies or doing zoom calls buffer or get interrupted, drops sometimes, or just buffers." • "Need reliable high speed internet at rural prison locations. We do some computer classes with limited internet access." Affordability: • "A large percentage of our population is homeless and/or financially insecure. This is a huge barrier to clothing, food, as well as internet access." • "Cost; credit history with the major carriers; lack of knowledge of ACP." • "My area is not in a greatly populated area. Therefore, companies charge outrageous prices to come out and run lines to my home." Limited choice of providers, leading to high cost: • "Our city has one internet provider. The service is good and reliable. Many people consider the service too costly." • "We are located in rural, southeast Georgia. There is one local internet provider, and other providers, like Hughes net, have limited network availability due to the rural nature of the area and are cost prohibitive." • "One provider, lack of service in rural areas if any at all. Cost is around $100 per month and not worth the money." "Poverty, lack of digital literacy, and imbedded inequity unite to prevent members of the community our organization serves from accessing or using broadband internet services. This part of GA

Survey question	Barriers identified
	[southwest] ranks the lowest in the state for broadband access… This internet desert leaves students in an information desert when they get home from school. Public schools in our region have access to broadband… but when students go home to do their homework (or research topics that became alive during the school day) the students are severely constrained by lack of access to broadband. … Their [unserved residents in southwest Georgia] experience includes leaving their homes and driving around the neighborhood until they can get a signal strong enough to sustain a conversation in a Zoom meeting.) … We need an economic development strategy that brings Broadband to rural residents in southwest Georgia, especially those below the poverty line. This area severely lacks E-commerce opportunities. Six months ago, a neighbor of one team member lost her remote job because of slow internet speed. The need here is not hypothetical. Broadband internet can provide access to online education, training, and commerce resources that are scarce in Southwest Georgia."
Device barriers	Availability of service: • "We can afford a home computer. The problem is that the companies will not run affordable high-speed service to my area." • "The school district supplies computers for the students, but without internet they are useless." Access to devices: • "Between the price of equipment and internet, a lot of homes still do not have computer access." • Not enough devices for all members of a household. • "Despite what many may assume, many high school and university students do not [have] access to a computer with internet connectivity for individual use. This greatly restricts their access [to] essential educational resources and contributes directly to incomplete assignments." • Libraries provide access, but transportation can be an issue and computers are only available during open hours. • "New times for public agencies (closing before 6pm) who have computers for the community to use." • Many individuals rely on smartphones. • "Due to security restrictions with incarcerated individuals, there must be restricted networks, whitelisting, secured devices, etc."
Digital literacy barriers	Lack of available, accessible training: • "Digital literacy taught at various times of day to accommodate

Survey question	Barriers identified
	working individuals and those in school." • "Local training and advanced options, transportation to trainings, direct outreach and guidance, device ownership, home internet access." Multiple respondents indicate challenges for seniors: • "The elderly population that uses our services are struggling with having adequate digital skills. There is no one outside of their family who can help them. The public library is being heavily used for these services - almost to the point of not having enough help to serve." Respondents note individuals may be familiar with a smartphone but not a computer.
Barriers to accessible content	Lack of access to content: • "Availability of assistive technologies in libraries varies depending on location, funding, need." • "The internet has useful, relevant content for the area we serve. Opportunities for telehealth, training, e-commerce, and doing homework all exist. The widespread absence of broadband accessibility and connectivity make all those internet resources inaccessible to much of our population."
Barriers to data privacy and cybersecurity	Cost of antivirus software Lack of knowledge/skills/experience • "Lacking devices and broadband makes data privacy and cyber security a moot point until access is on the horizon."
Programmatic recommendations	Access combined with publicly available, free training Emphasis on libraries as accessible CAIs: • "Libraries provide basic digital literacy skills training and support (depends on area and ability). Expanding these programs to more advanced skills, covering areas that currently do not provide training, and increasing frequency/availability would be made possible with additional funding for staff, educating staff (train the trainers), hiring outside trainers for local programming, devices and labs to conduct training in, lending devices for patrons to take home and practice with." • "The public library is a great place with equal access to all residents in the community. It's a non-threatening place to visit. We would need trained professionals to teach specialty

Survey question	Barriers identified
	programming - we can provide the space. We need educational materials to distribute."

Broadband adoption

Some Georgia households do not use broadband even when the infrastructure is available to them—whether because the service cost is a barrier, they do not have a computer, they lack the skills to use the internet, or other reasons.

Rates of internet subscription, as well as rates of computer ownership, are tracked by the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). According to the most recent ACS five-year estimates, 13.8 percent of Georgia's households do not subscribe to an internet service, and 6.8 percent do not have a computer.[261]

Broadband adoption rates in the state correlate with income; analysis for the State's 2022 broadband strategic plan showed that households in areas with higher average median household incomes, such as Atlanta, Savannah, and Macon, tend to show higher levels of internet access and broadband adoption. A statewide analysis of ACS data by county showed that broadband subscription rates tend to increase as median household income increases.[262]
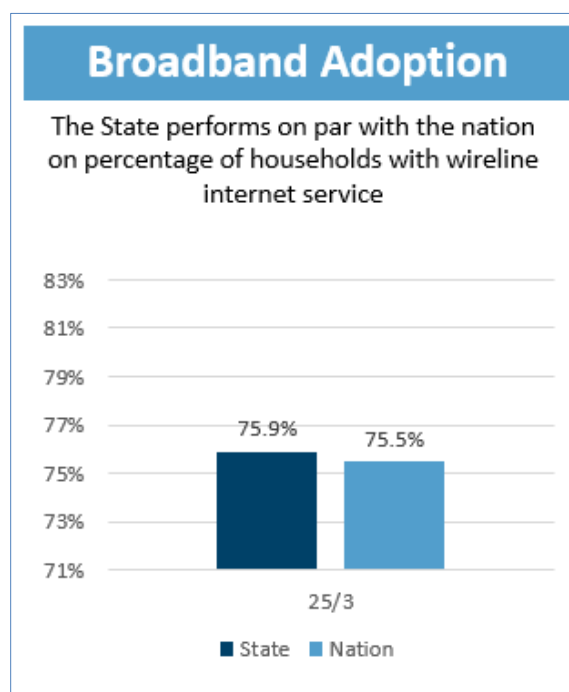
Georgia's broadband adoption rate is slightly above the national average.

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[261] U.S. Census, "Computer and Internet Use," American Community Survey, https://www.census.gov/acs/www/about/why-we-ask-each-question/computer/.
[262] Analysis from Georgia Broadband Strategy (2022), available upon request.

Figure 9. Georgia adoption compared to national average

The State has identified multi-sectoral needs to increase broadband adoption rates to achieve benefits in terms of economic development, education, and telemedicine.

GTA believes investments in broadband infrastructure and other efforts to increase broadband adoption will create long-term economic benefits. Per analysis conducted for the State's 2022 broadband strategic plan, should an additional 210,000 to 351,000 households enroll in broadband (corresponding to a 30 or 50 percent reduction in the number of nonadopters), Georgia could see an increase of $120 million to $223 million in household income. There could also be 15,800 to 19,500 new jobs resulting in $1.1 billion to $1.4 billion in additional earnings. In sum, the total estimated economic impact of expanded broadband adoption over 10 years, not including the direct impact of spending on construction, could exceed $5 billion.[263]

Improving broadband adoption rates will enable more residents to access telehealth, which in turn will present opportunities for better outcomes for patients, and savings to patients and providers alike. Telehealth offers access to care for residents who are limited by access to transportation, health needs, or even busy schedules. It also decreases no-shows, saving hospitals money, and decreases road miles that need to be driven to appointments.

Telecommunications systems in Georgia are a critical foundation to improving health outcomes for Georgians and the overall efficiency of our healthcare system. According to the analysis in the

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[263] "2022 Georgia Broadband Annual Report," GTA, https://broadband.georgia.gov/media/35/download.

State's broadband strategic plan, healthcare savings in the state with the adoption of telemedicine could range from $1.2 billion to $2 billion, and the consumer surplus value over 10 years is an estimated $2.8 billion to $4.6 billion.[264] The State has an important resource for these efforts in the Global Partnership for Telehealth (GPT), one of the largest nonprofit telehealth networks in the U.S.

Georgia's rural communities face disparities in access to care and health outcomes. In 2018, the State awarded grant funding to Mercer University School of Medicine to establish the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center,[265] which partners with Georgia's rural counties on a range of targeted initiatives to address the complex healthcare challenges facing their communities. Through a partnership with GPT, the Center has provided telehealth access to 40 providers in rural areas of the State.[266]

In the education sector, it is expected that K-12 school districts now or in the future may rely more on a combination of in-person and "in the cloud" teaching, including assigning homework where students must collaborate on shared files. In that light, increasing broadband adoption will pay dividends in terms of education.

In addition to conducting more classes online, a growing number of schools are providing curriculum about digital skills that are necessary for many 21st century jobs, like coding and computer science. These courses can start at a young age and require a computer and internet connection to practice and learn.

To meet students' bandwidth and connection needs, a recent report recommends speeds of at least 25 Mbps (download) and 12 Mbps (upload) per student, rather than per household.[267] And as with other applications, broadband speeds sufficient today will likely not be sufficient in years to come.

Recognizing that many students in Georgia's rural areas lack adequate access to broadband, technology, and devices, the Georgia Department of Education's (GaDOE) Office of Rural Education and Innovation (established in 2021) has made connectivity one of its key priorities. The Office's initiatives include increasing broadband access and adoption through awarding technology grants to rural school districts and promoting ACP enrollment, providing

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[264] "2022 Georgia Broadband Annual Report," GTA, https://broadband.georgia.gov/media/35/download.
[265] Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center, https://www.georgiaruralhealth.org/about/.
[266] "Grand Challenges," Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center, https://www.georgiaruralhealth.org/grand-challenges/.
[267] David Nagel, "Landmark Study Calls for Increased Bandwidth for At-Home Learning," The Journal: Transforming Education through Technology, May 4, 2021, https://thejournal.com/articles/2021/05/04/landmark-study-calls-for-increased-bandwidth-for-at-home-learning.aspx.

cybersecurity training and tools, and ensuring equitable access to 21st century learning and devices.[268]

While GaDOE data indicate that statewide, more than 99 percent of classrooms had high-speed internet access for the 2022 school year and the school systems had more devices than students—with a ratio of 67:100 for all devices—significant gaps exist in some districts. Notably, three school districts in the coastal area between Savannah and Brunswick have schools with no high-speed internet, as do a handful of other districts across the State. In several Clayton County schools, approximately 35 percent of classrooms do not have high-speed internet access.[269]

Broadband affordability

Affordability is a barrier to broadband adoption in Georgia for some and an obstacle for many, and while discounted services and subsidy programs are available there is low awareness of and participation in these programs.

According to stakeholder outreach, some residents pay a high cost for service (especially DSL) that is not adequate to complete schoolwork or to work from home. Parents described choosing between completing adult education coursework or having their child participate in class because their home internet connection speed is inadequate to support both users.

While some households may need additional support, the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) represents one of the most important programs to assist households struggling to afford the cost of broadband. Georgia's percentage of households that participate in federal subsidies is higher than the national average. However, a significant number of households in the State may not be taking advantage of the program. As of March 2023, 576,430 households in Georgia are enrolled in the ACP [270] out of a total 1,571,000 eligible, per a 2022 estimate [271] —representing a participation rate of 36.7 percent.

This enrollment rate shows an improvement as compared to the statewide participation rates in the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) program, the predecessor to the ACP. An estimated 27

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[268] "Rural Education and Innovation presentation," GaDOE, https://shealy-my.sharepoint.com/:p:/g/personal/bronwyn_ragan-martin_doe_k12_ga_us/EVNQvk9O94NIjLoS2WyDpJoB9aT8i7wSHHuoaWUlxtO3vw?e=Il8NPA.

[269] "Technology Inventory," GaDOE, https://georgiainsights.gadoe.org/Dashboards/Pages/Technology-Inventory.aspx.

[270] "ACP Enrollment and Claims Tracker," USAC, last updated March 27, 2023, https://www.usac.org/about/affordable-connectivity-program/acp-enrollment-and-claims-tracker/ (accessed March 28, 2023).

[271] "Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Fact Sheet: Georgia," White House Briefing Room, July 2022, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Georgia-BIL-Fact-Sheet.pdf.

percent of potentially eligible Georgia households subscribed to the EBB.[272] It should be noted that the ACP has broader eligibility requirements.

In a survey of organizations serving NTIA-defined covered populations conducted in 2023 for the development of this Plan, most respondents (32 of 57) either disagreed or strongly disagreed—with over half (18) strongly disagreeing—that available internet service is affordable. Respondents saw affordability as a particular issue for covered populations.

During public listening sessions, some residents in covered households reported that covering other monthly bills such as electricity is a key concern even with a subsidy, compounded by incremental increases in the cost of service—and households who have past-due bills with an ISP are unable to enroll in the ACP. Stakeholders also identified that affordability is a particular concern for rural minority residents.

During the preparation of the State's 2022 broadband strategic plan, the Director of IT for GaDOE discussed many of the challenges in helping eligible families enroll for the EBB, including the substantial "paperwork" (virtual) required and some families' distrust of federal government programs. They noted that outreach from trusted local sources, such as schools, libraries, and community organizations, was key to encouraging enrollment.[273] Stakeholder engagement conducted for this Plan also identified that eligible individuals in the State who are English language learners and/or non-English speakers may not be aware of the program and may have difficulty filling out the online forms to enroll.

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[272] Represents the percentage of households who were eligible for Lifeline that were enrolled in the EBB, as the program's eligibility was aligned with eligibility for Lifeline; analysis from Georgia Broadband Strategy (2022).
[273] Georgia Broadband Strategy (2022).

Appendix E: Residential broadband and digital connectivity needs assessment survey results

The results presented in this appendix are based on analysis of information provided by 1,555 residents of Georgia, from an estimated 3,885,371 households. Results are representative of the set of households with a confidence interval of ±2.5 percent at the aggregate level.

Survey responses were entered into SPSS[274] software and the entries were coded and labeled. SPSS databases were formatted, cleaned, and verified prior to the data analysis. The survey data was evaluated using techniques in SPSS including frequency tables, cross-tabulations, and means functions. Statistically significant differences between subgroups of response categories are highlighted and discussed where relevant.

The survey responses were weighted based on region, household income, respondent age and ethnicity. Since respondents in lower income households, racial or ethnic minorities, and younger individuals were less likely to respond, the weighting corrects for the potential bias based on the household income, ethnicity, and age of the respondent. Additionally, some regions of the State were over-sampled. In this manner, the results more closely reflect the opinions of the State's adult population.

Unless otherwise indicated, the percentages reported are based on the "valid" responses from those who provided a definite answer and do not reflect individuals who said "don't know" or otherwise did not supply an answer because the question did not apply to them. Key statistically significant results ($p \leq 0.05$) are noted where appropriate.
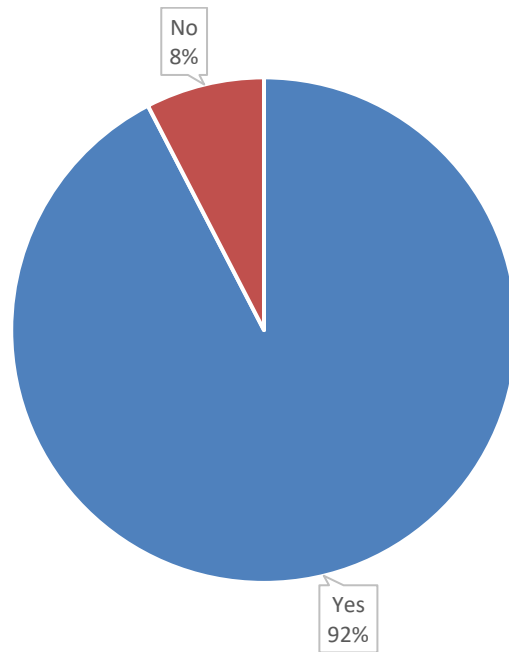
Key findings

Eight percent of surveyed households report not having home internet service (see Figure 10).

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[274] Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, http://www-01.ibm.com/software/analytics/spss/.

Figure 10. Percent of households with home internet service

99 percent of households with a student report having home internet service, compared to 86 percent of households without a student (see Figure 11).

**Figure 11. Percent of households that receive home internet service by student in household**
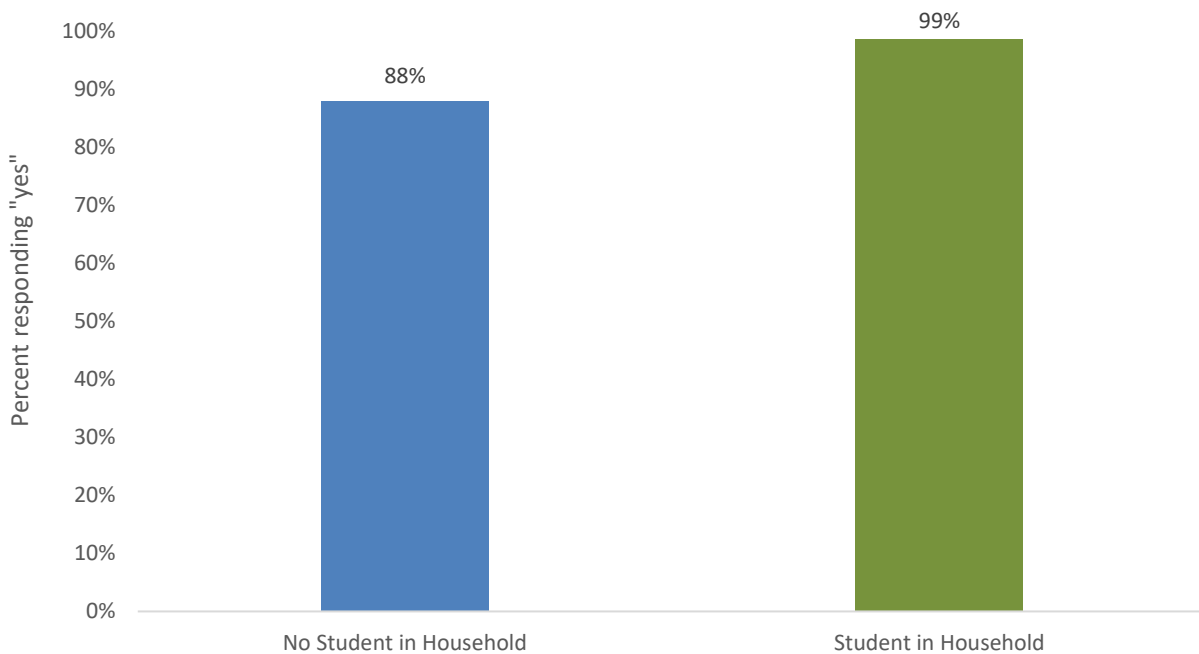
Data was oversampled to make sure that the needs of covered populations in underpopulated, rural areas received adequate sampling.

- Region 1: Calhoun, Charlton, and Dougherty counties
- Region 2: Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Clinch, Coffee, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Pierce, Tift, Turner, Ware, Baker, Colquitt, Decatur, Early, Grady, Lee, Miller, Mitchell, Seminole, Terrell, Thomas, and Worth counties
- Region 3: all remaining counties in the state

93 percent of households in region 3 report having home internet service, compared to 86 percent in region 1 and region 2 (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. Percent of households that purchase home internet service by region
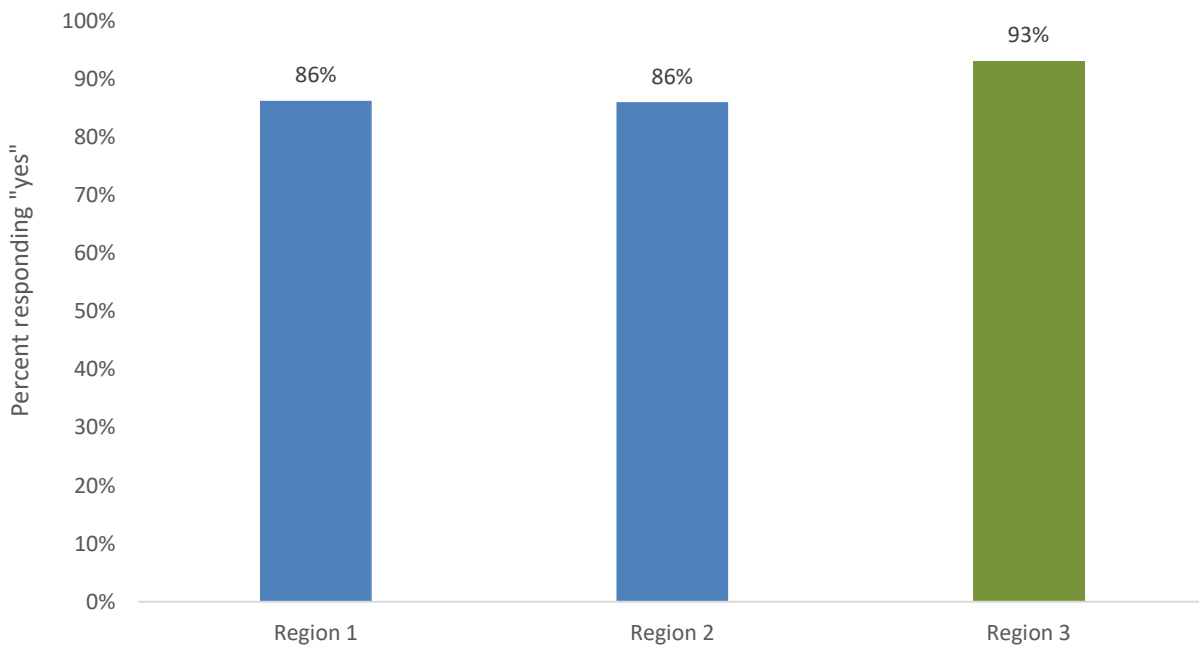
Of the households who report not having home internet service, the two most common reasons are that home internet service is unavailable in the area and they cannot afford the service (see Figure 13).
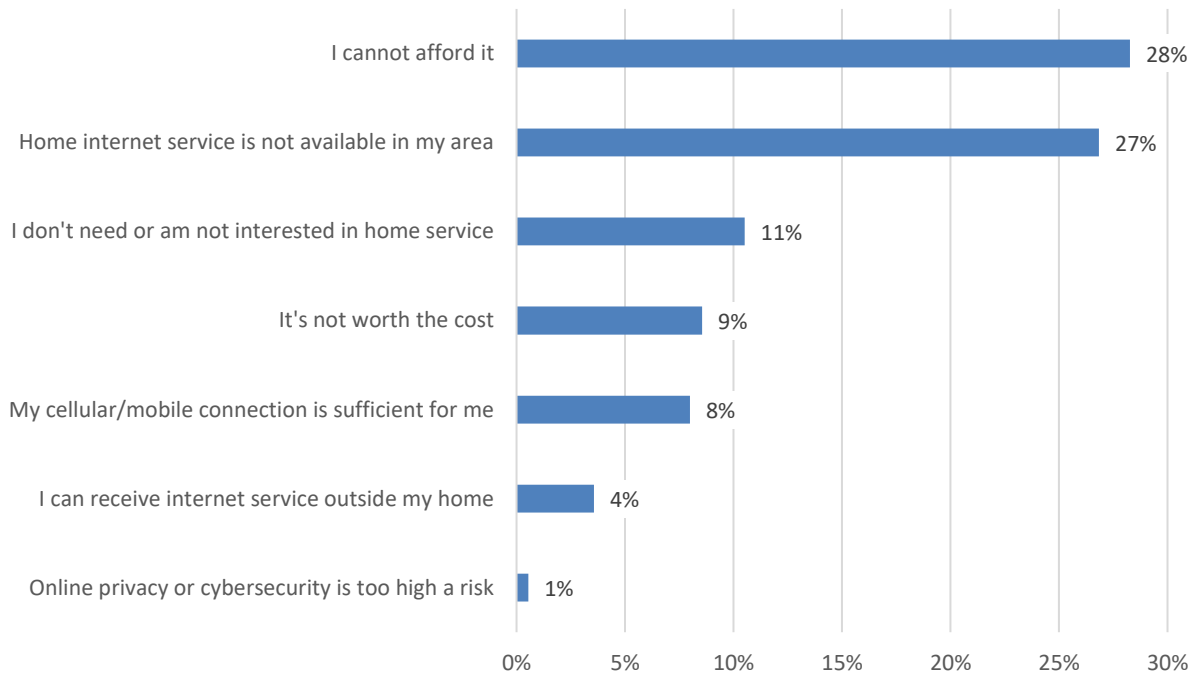
Figure 13. Reasons households do not purchase home internet service
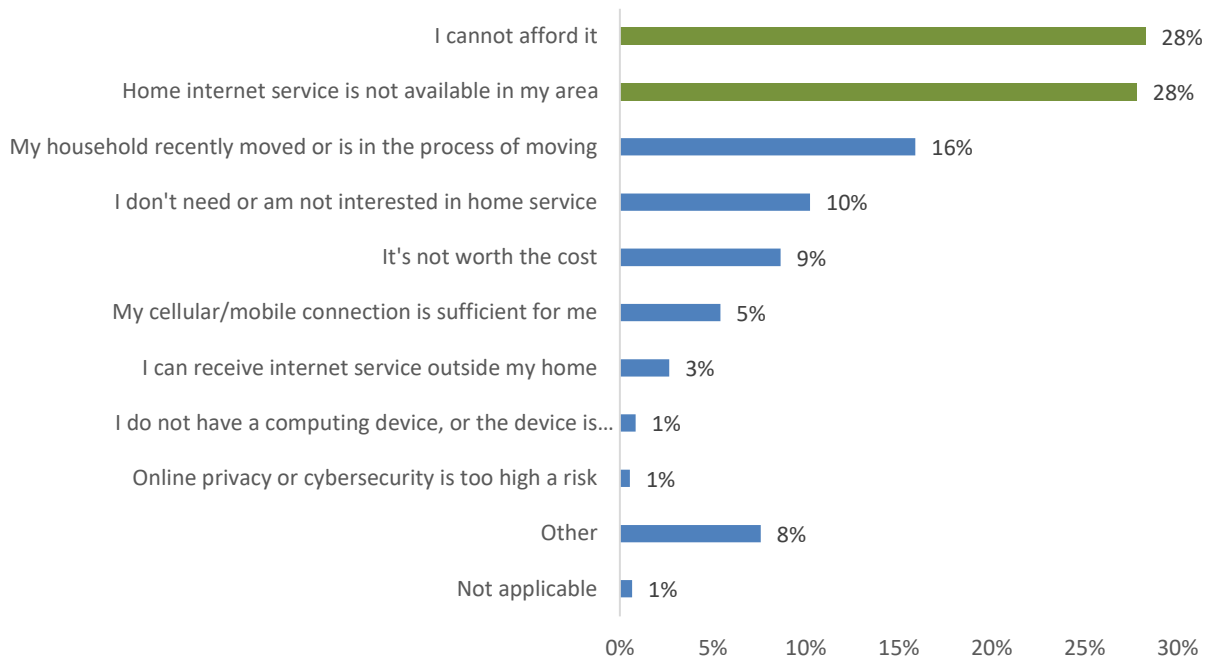
Percent of respondents (out of 121 who do not purchase home internet)

Of the households who report they do not purchase home internet service, the most comment reason was that they cannot afford the service. The second most common reason is that home internet service is unavailable in the area (see Figure 14).

Figure 14. Most important reason households do not purchase home internet service

Reason	Percentage
I cannot afford it	28%
Home internet service is not available in my area	27%
I don't need or am not interested in home service	11%
It's not worth the cost	9%
My cellular/mobile connection is sufficient for me	8%
I can receive internet service outside my home	4%
Online privacy or cybersecurity is too high a risk	1%

Number of respondents (out of 121 who do not purchase home internet)

Only 5 percent of households report being enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), while an additional 2 percent report being enrolled in an ISP program or the federal Lifeline program (see Figure 15).

Figure 15. Percent of households with home internet service that are enrolled in subsidy programs
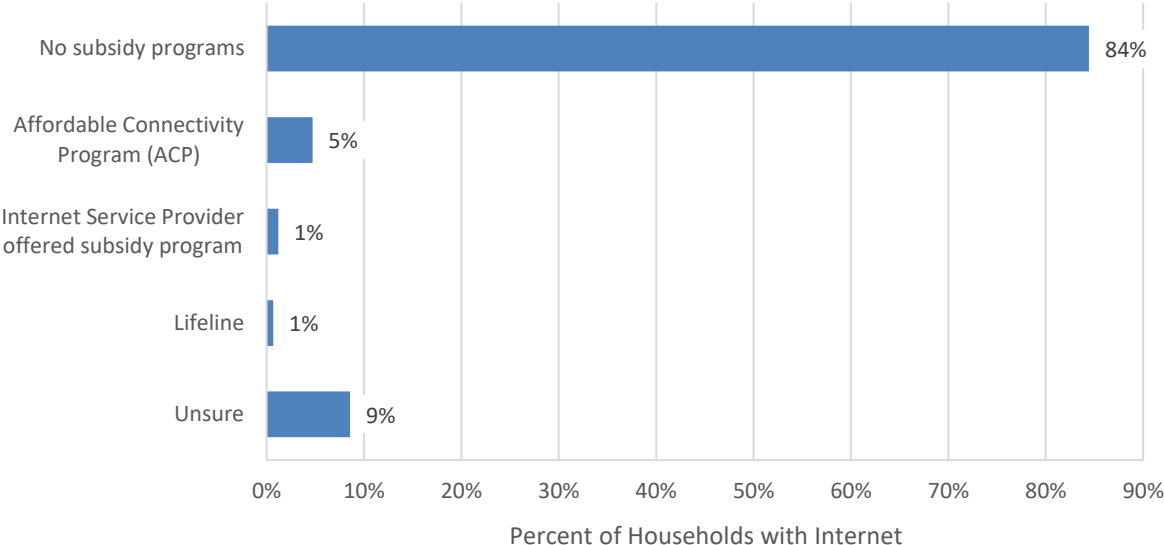
In households earning less than $50,000, 19 percent report they do not have a computer. In households with incomes of $100,000 or more, 95 percent report they do have a computer (see Table 46).

Table 46. Number of computers by household income

|		Less than $50,000	$50,000 to $74,999	$75,000 to $99,999	$100,000 or more
Computers	None	19%	16%	8%	5%
	One	48%	36%	38%	14%
	Two	21%	30%	25%	32%
	Three or more	12%	19%	29%	49%
	Total Weighted Count	355	199	159	301

Households with individuals with a formerly incarcerated individual are more likely than other groups to not own a single computer (57 percent) (see Table 47).

Table 47. Number of computing devices by demographic group

		Veteran	Individual with a disability	Primarily non-English speaker	Formerly incarcerated individual	Actively enrolled in K-12, college, or other higher ed
Computers	None	9%	19%	0%	57%	12%
	One	33%	34%	18%	15%	27%
	Two	28%	18%	15%	25%	26%
	Three or more	30%	29%	67%	3%	35%
	Total Weighted Count	196	243	18	43	654

Four percent of households reported a broken device could not be replaced within 6 months or in the foreseeable future (see Figure 16).

Figure 16. Likelihood of replacing a computing device
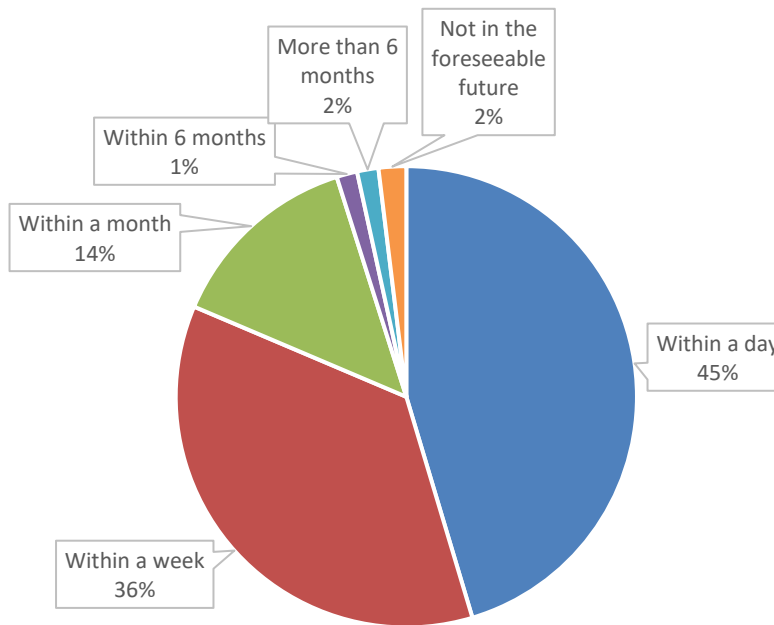
Except for the activity of accessing medical service or resources, low-income households are consistently less confident in their ability to complete activities online than are high-income households. For almost all online tasks, fewer low-income households reported that they are very confident compared to high-income households (see Figure 17).

Figure 17. Very confident in using the internet for various activities by household income


Legend: ■ Less than $50,000 ■ $50,000 to $74,999 ■ $75,000 to $99,999 ■ $100,000 or more

X-axis: Percentage of households (0% to 120%)

Y-axis categories (Internet Activity):
- Sending and receiving emails
- Using social media
- Participating in online video, voice, or conference calls
- Operating a small (home-based) business
- Working remotely and telecommuting
- Searching for a job online
- Taking classes or participating in online job training
- Accessing medical services or resources
- Accessing governmental services
- Shopping, etc. (online consumer services)
- Accessing online financial services

Generally, fewer households with seniors report that they are very confident completing online tasks compared to households without seniors. The outlier is for operating a small home-based business – 84 percent of households with a senior report being very confident compared to 63 percent of households without a senior (see Figure 18).
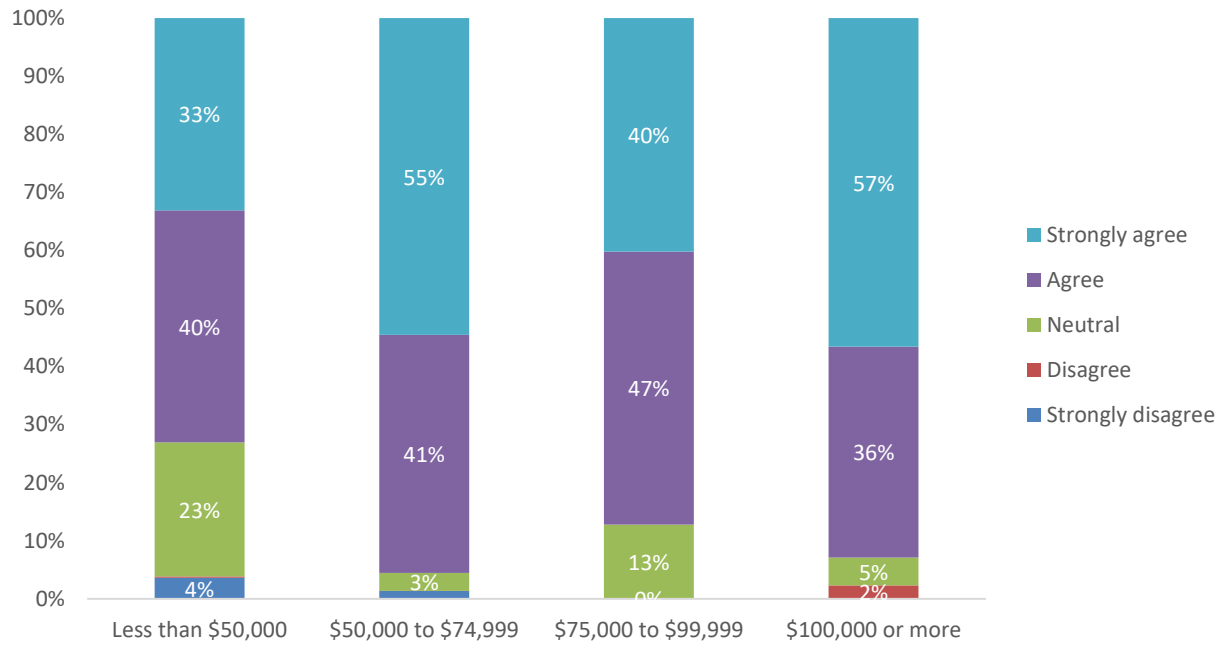
Figure 18. Percentage of households with seniors who are very confident in using the internet for online activities
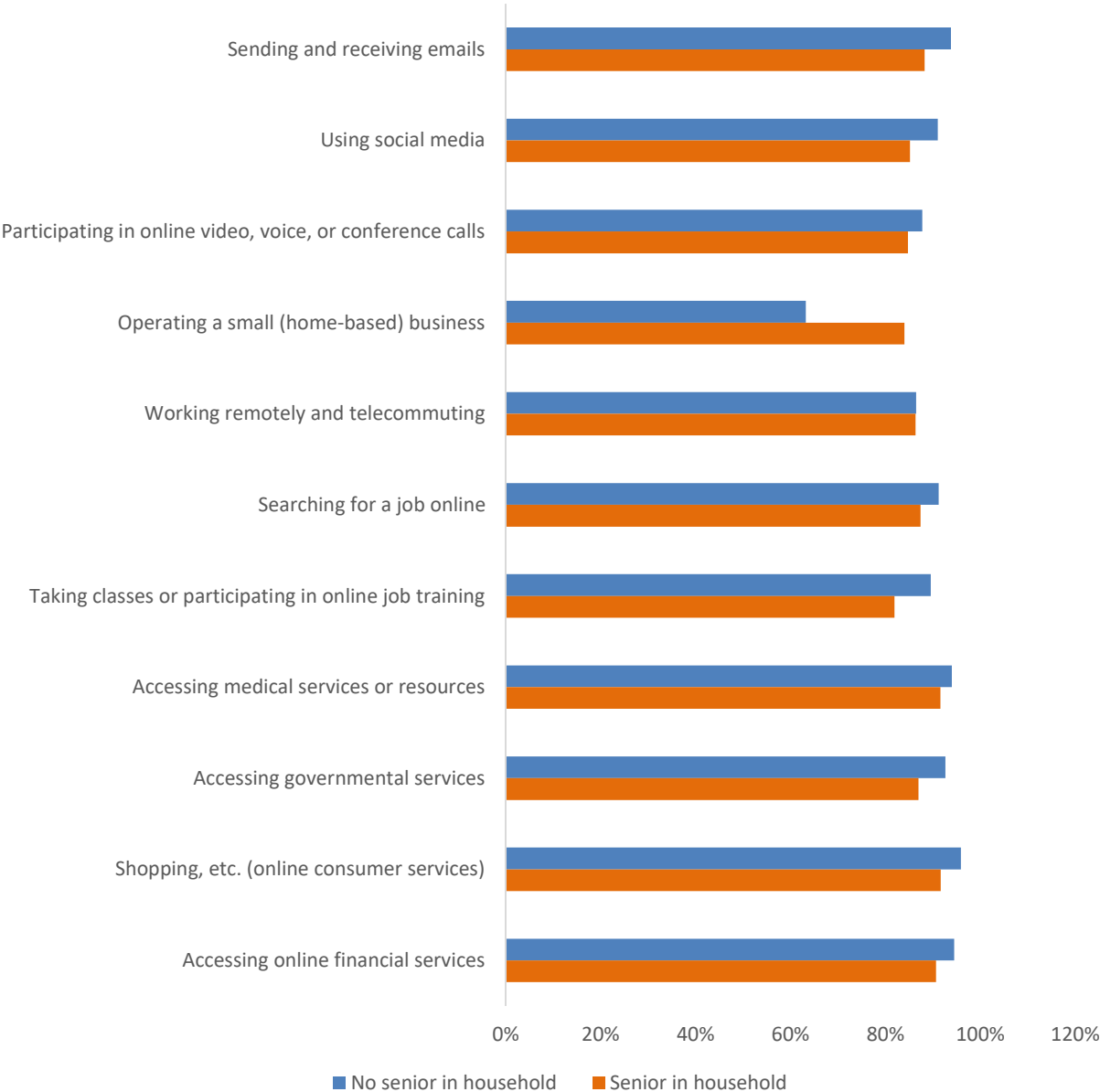

Households earning less than $50,000 report they are less likely to be able to recognize and avoid online fraud than households earning more than $100,000 (see Figure 19).

Figure 19. Ability to recognize and avoid online fraud by household income

Households earning less than $50,000 report they are less likely to be able to identify false or misleading information online than households earning more than $100,000 (see Figure 20).

Figure 20. Ability to identify false or misleading information by household income
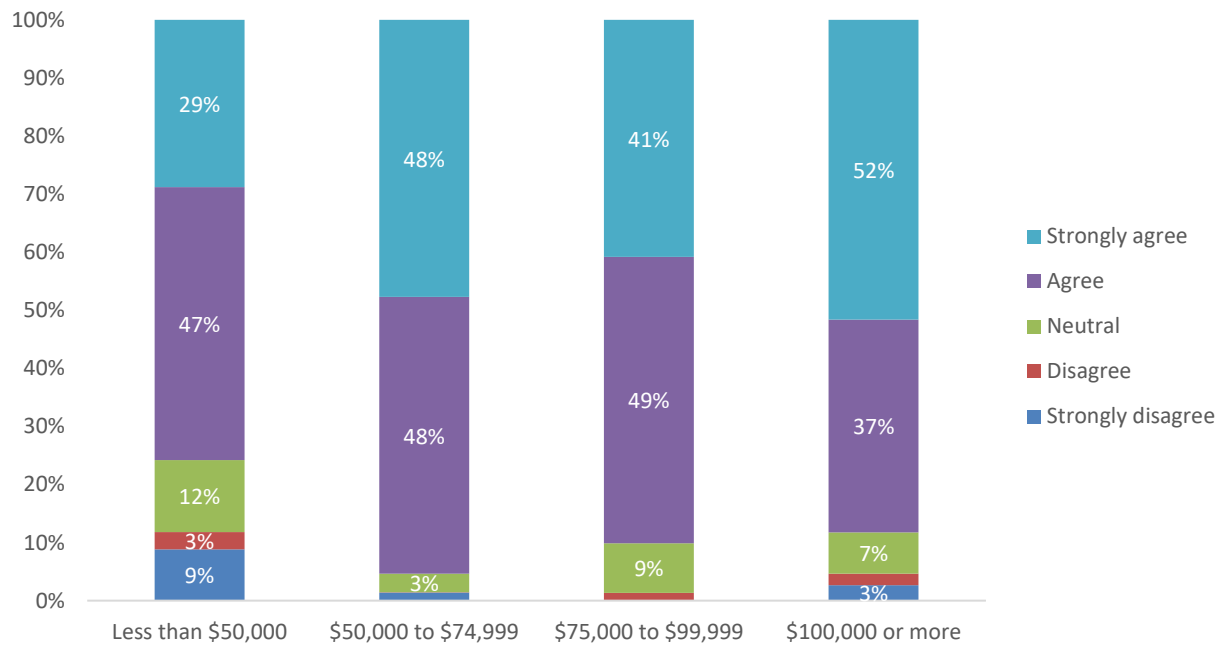
Internet service questions
Does your household receive home internet service – not mobile data?

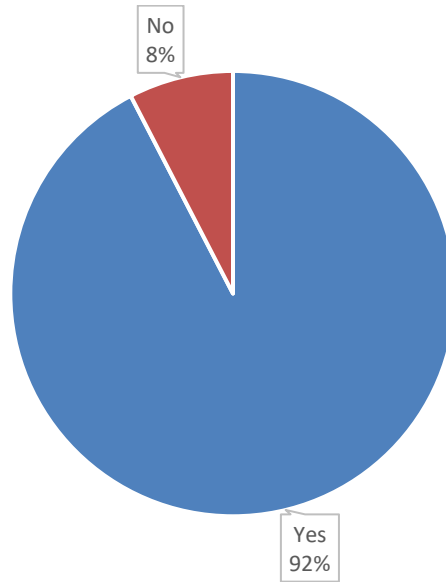**Figure 21. Percent of households that receive home internet service**

No
8%

Yes
92%

Figure 22. Percent of households that receive home internet service by region

86%

86%

93%

Region 1 — Region 2 — Region 3

Percent responding "yes"

Figure 23. Percent of at-risk households that receive home internet service

Veteran	Individual with a disability	Primarily non-English speaker	Formerly incarcerated individual	Actively enrolled in K-12 school or college or other higher education
96%	88%	100%	55%	99%
(n=196)	(n=243)	(n=18)	(n=43)	(n=654)

Figure 24. Percent of households that receive home internet service by household income

Less than $50,000	$50,000 to $74,999	$75,000 to $99,999	$100,000 or more
86%	98%	95%	100%

Figure 25 Percent of households that receive home internet service by race/ethnicity

Figure 26. Percent of households that receive home internet service by student in household

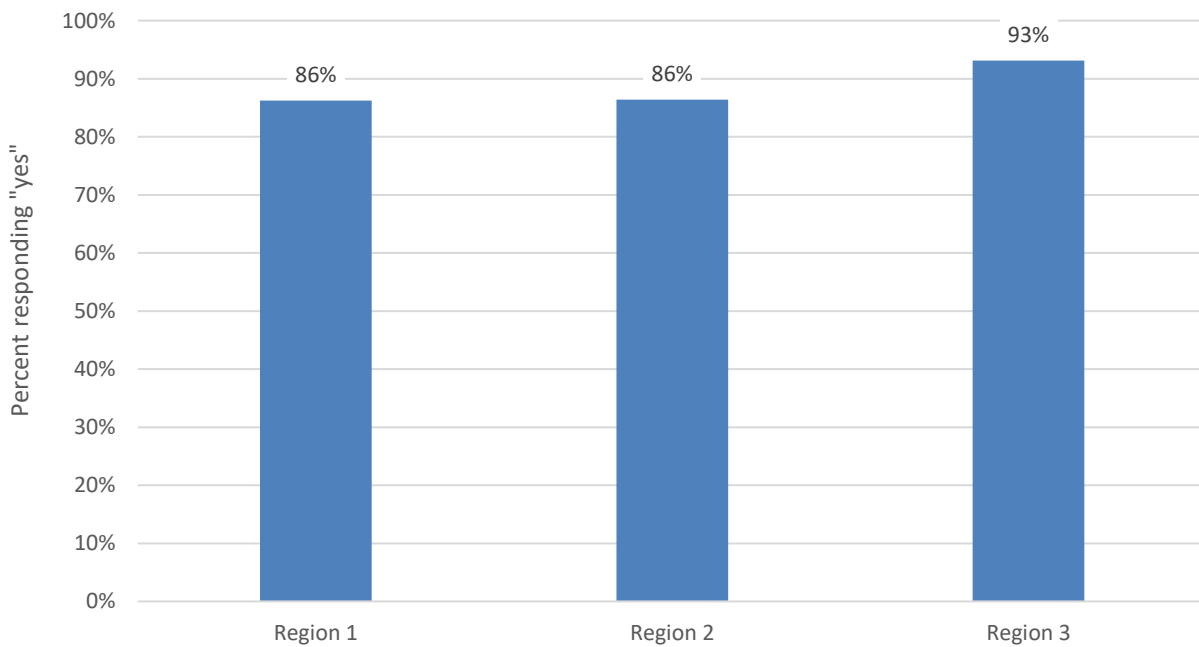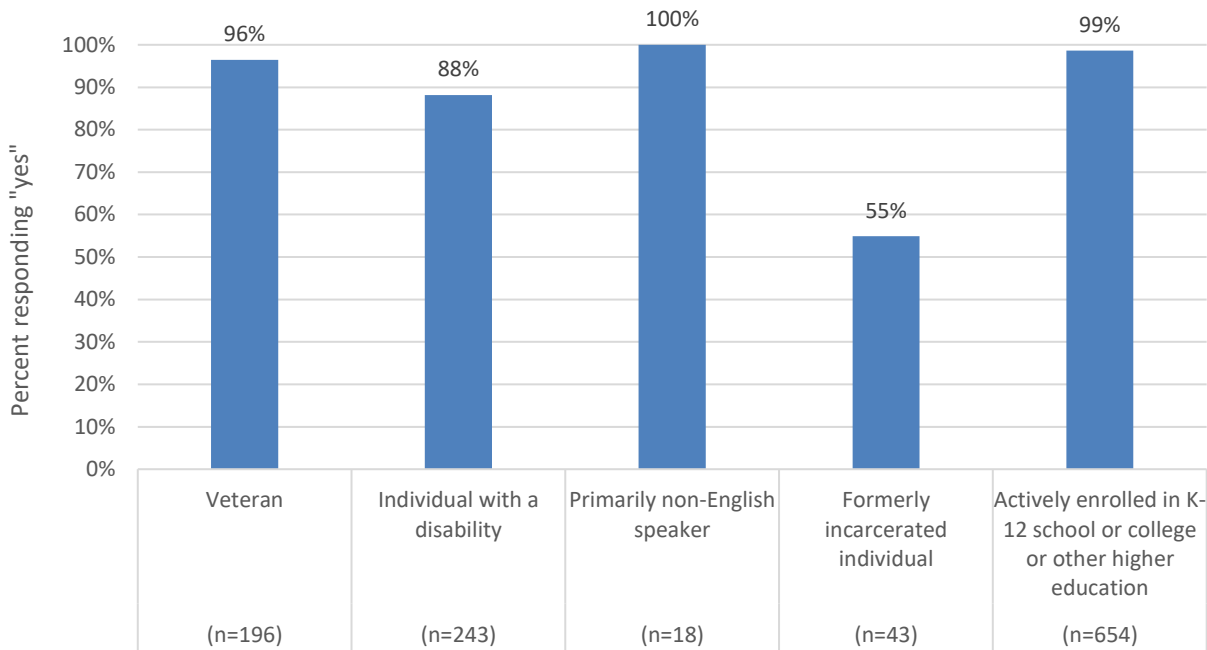**Figure 27. Percent of households that receive home internet service by household size**

Figure 28. Percent of households that receive home internet service by children in household (at least one household member under age 18)

Figure 29. Percent of households that receive home internet service by seniors in household (at least one household member age 65 or older)

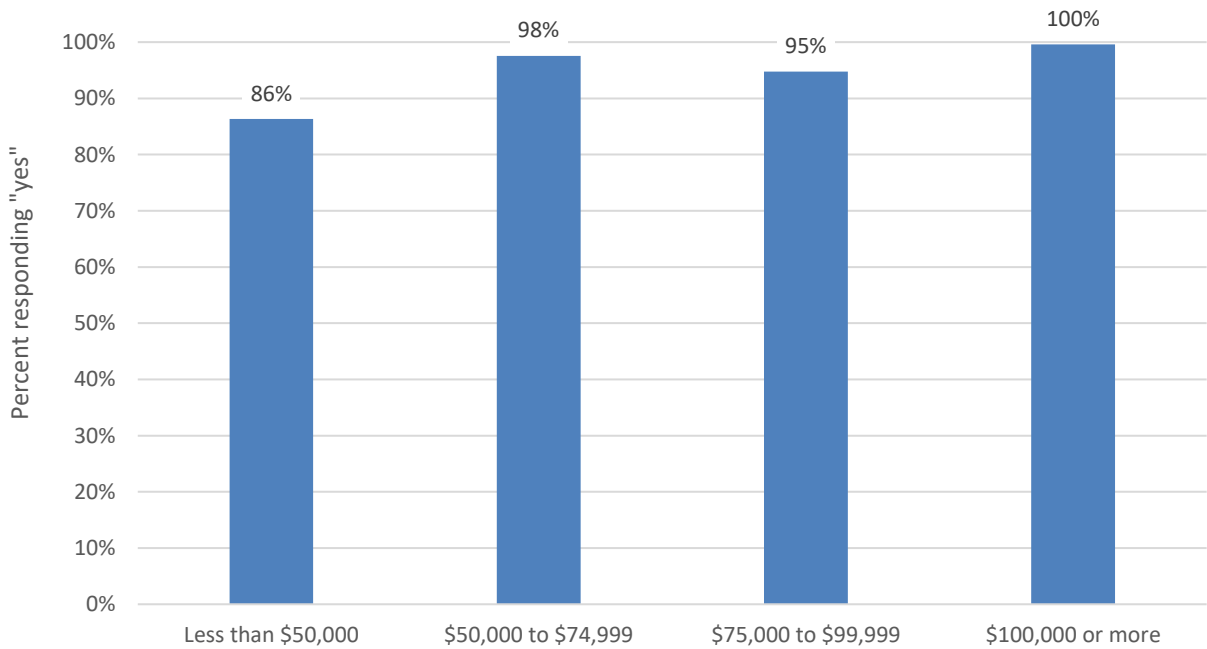**Figure 30. Percent of households that receive home internet service by respondent age**

Does your household purchase home internet service from an internet service provider?

Figure 31. Percent of households that purchase home internet service

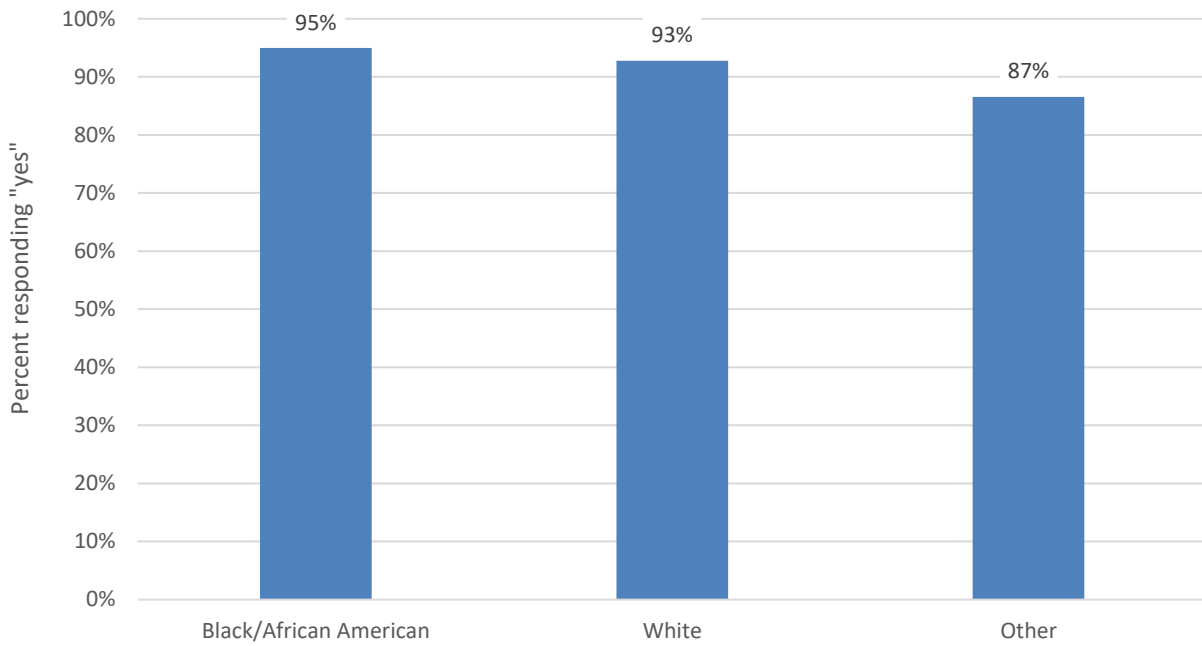**Figure 32. Percent of households that purchase home internet service by region**

Figure 33. Percent of at-risk households that purchase home internet service
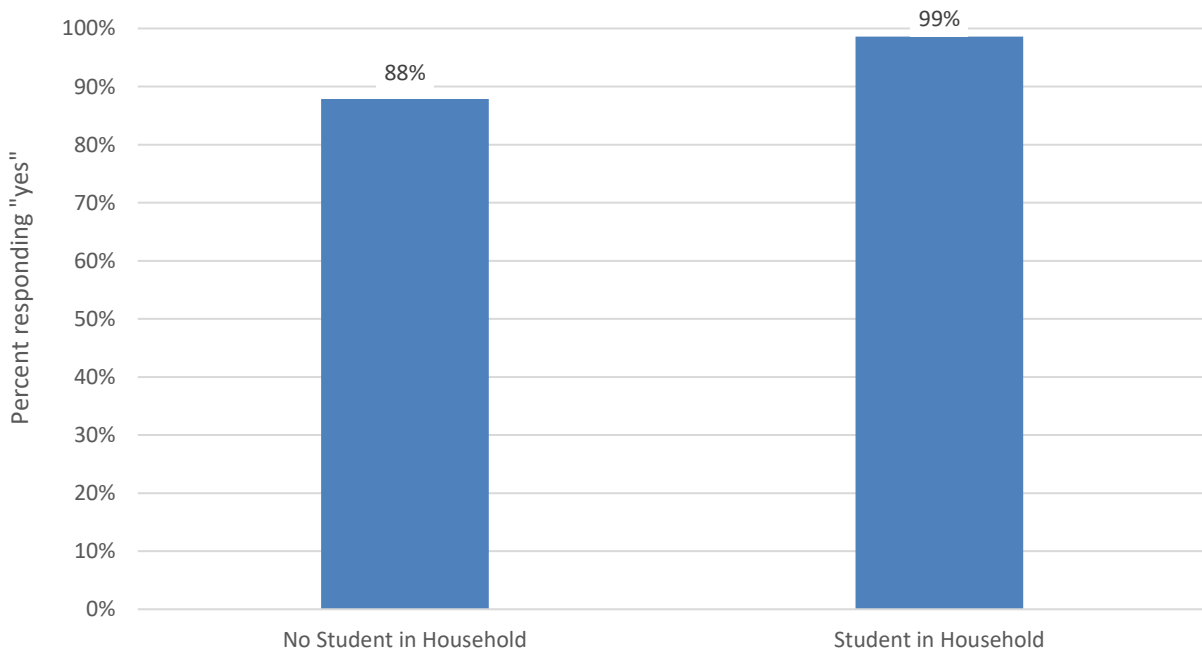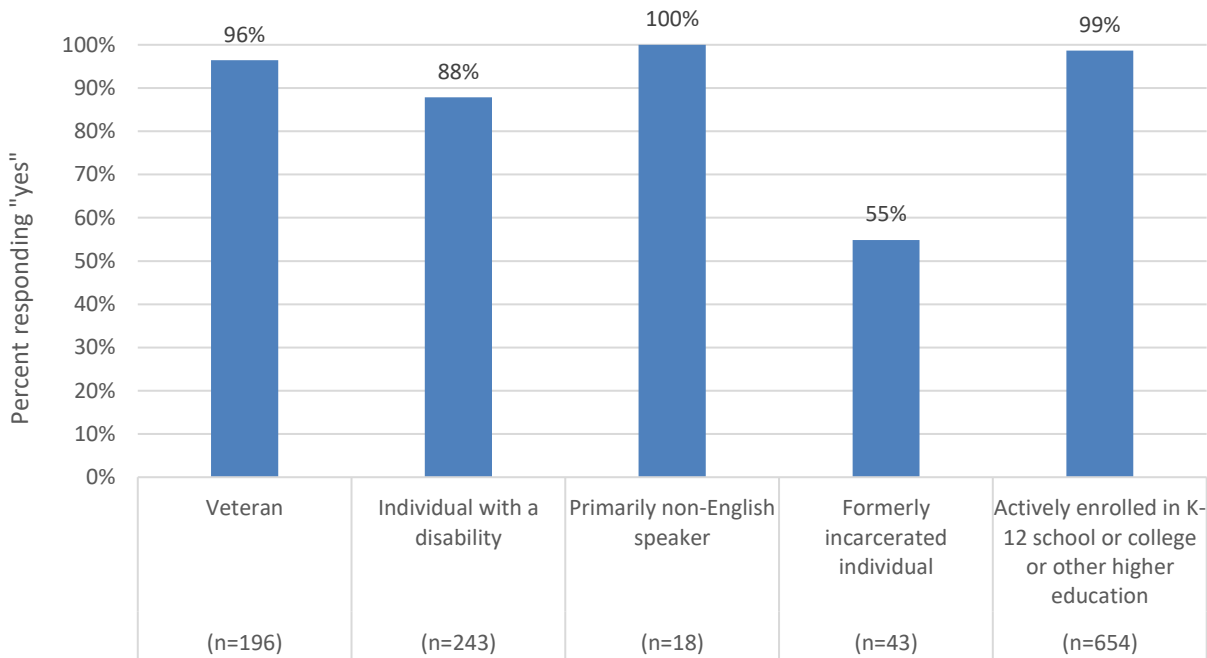

Figure 34. Percent of households that purchase home internet service by household income
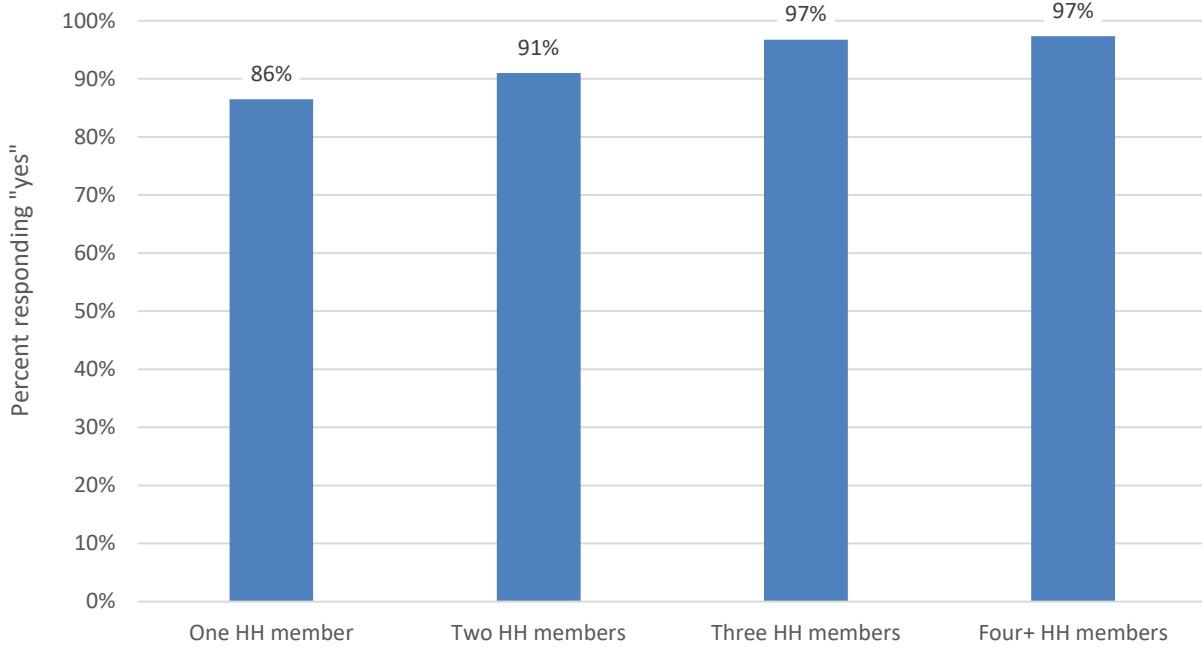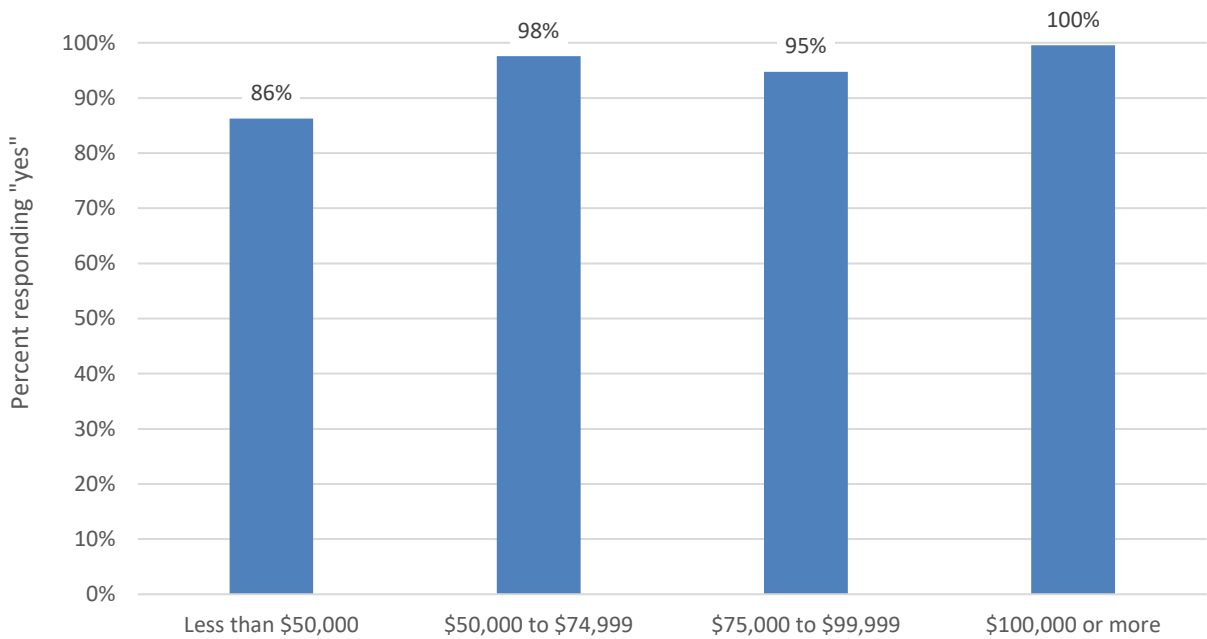
Figure 35. Percent of households that purchase home internet service by race/ethnicity
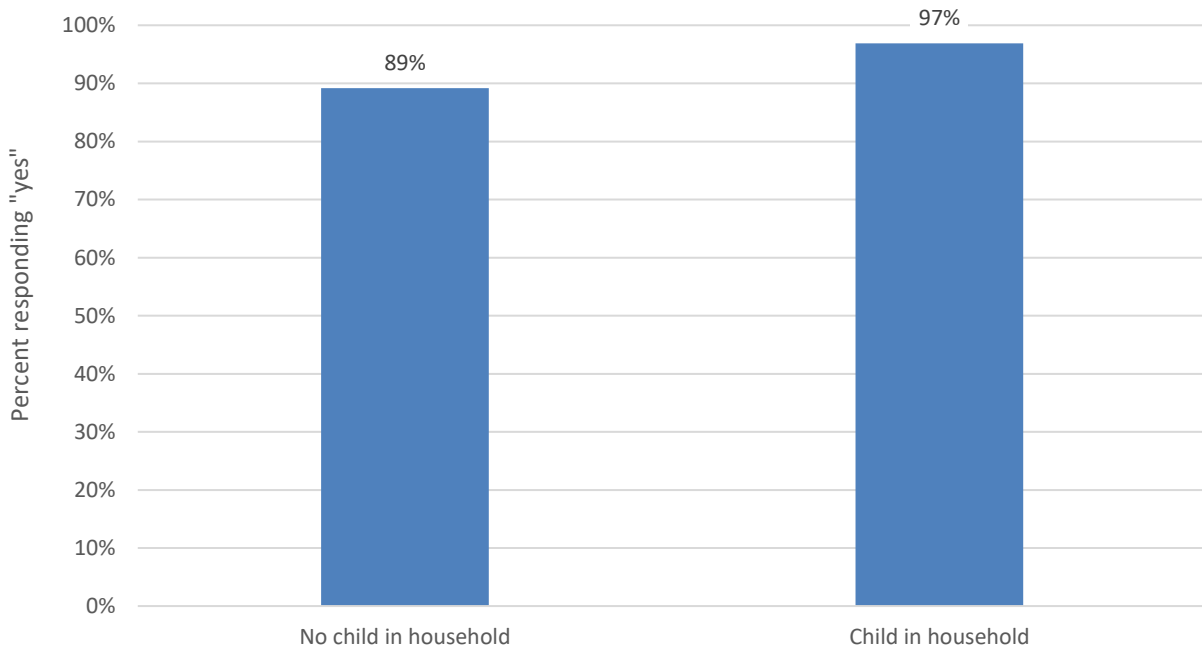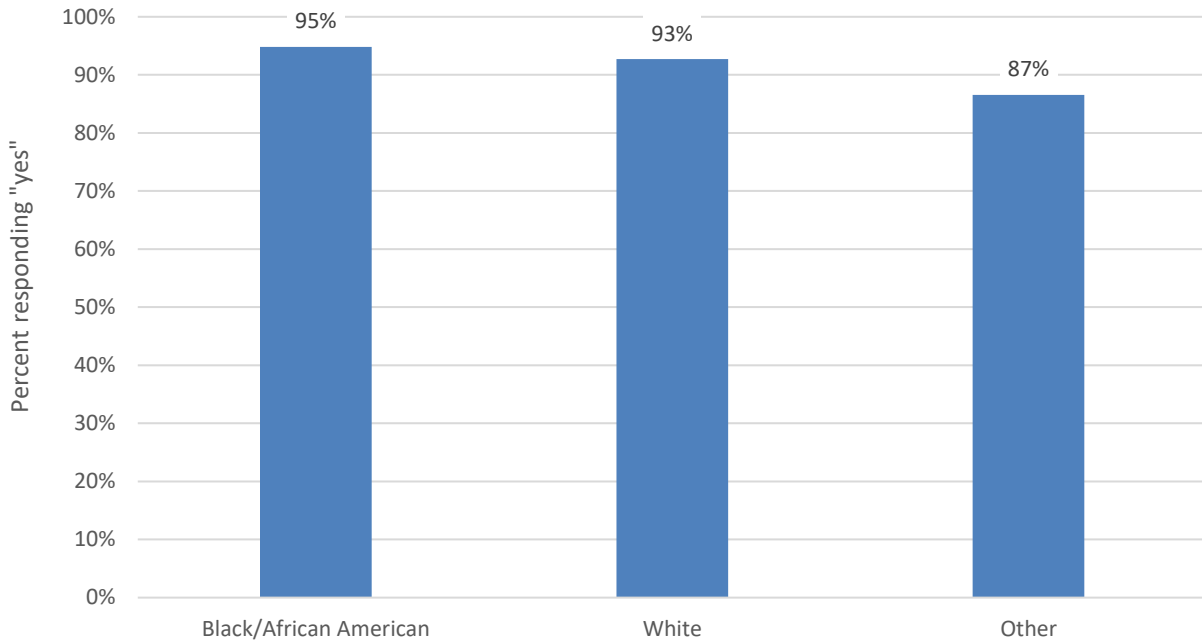

Figure 36. Percent of households that purchase home internet service by student in household
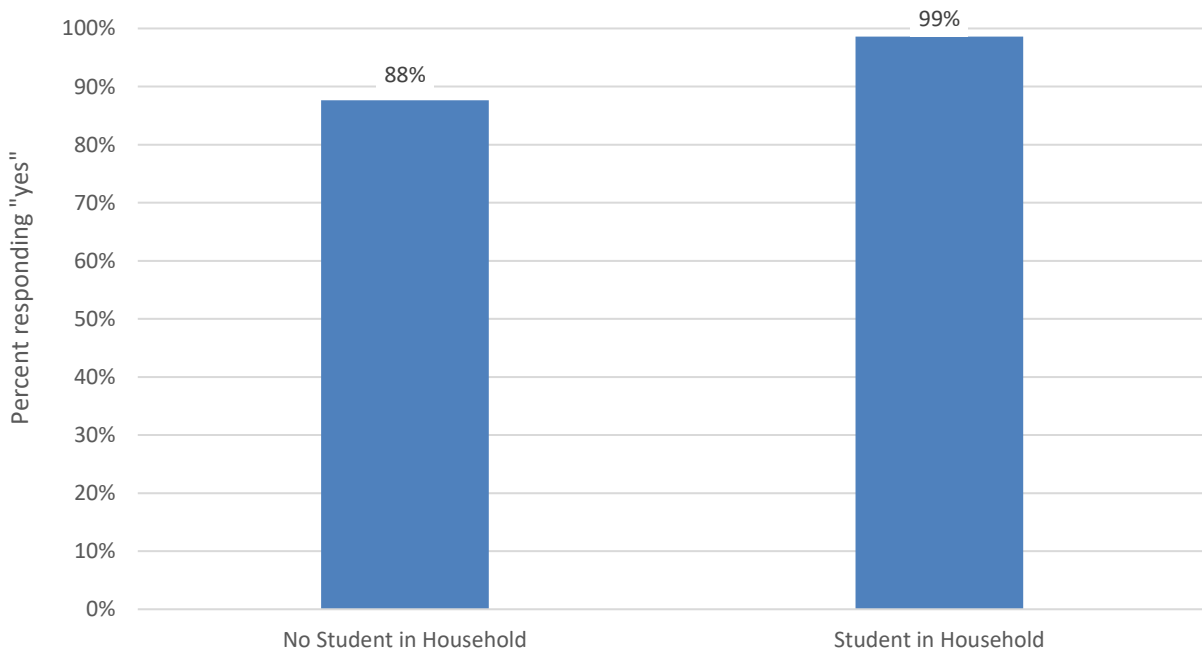
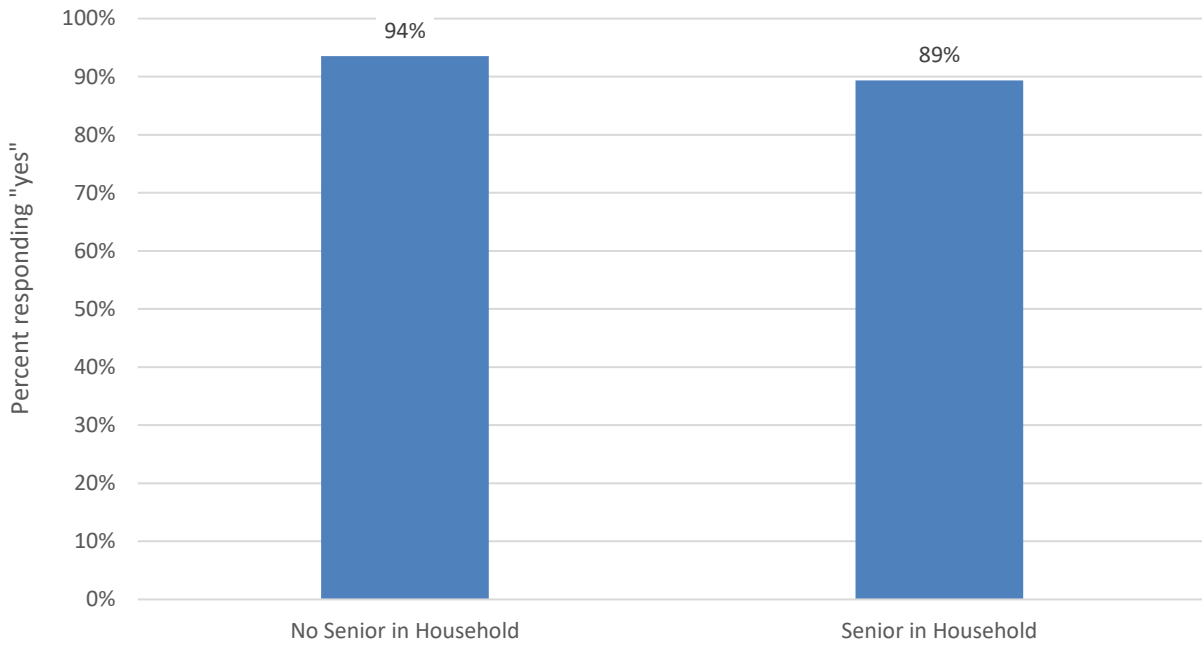**Figure 37. Percent of households that purchase home internet service by household size**
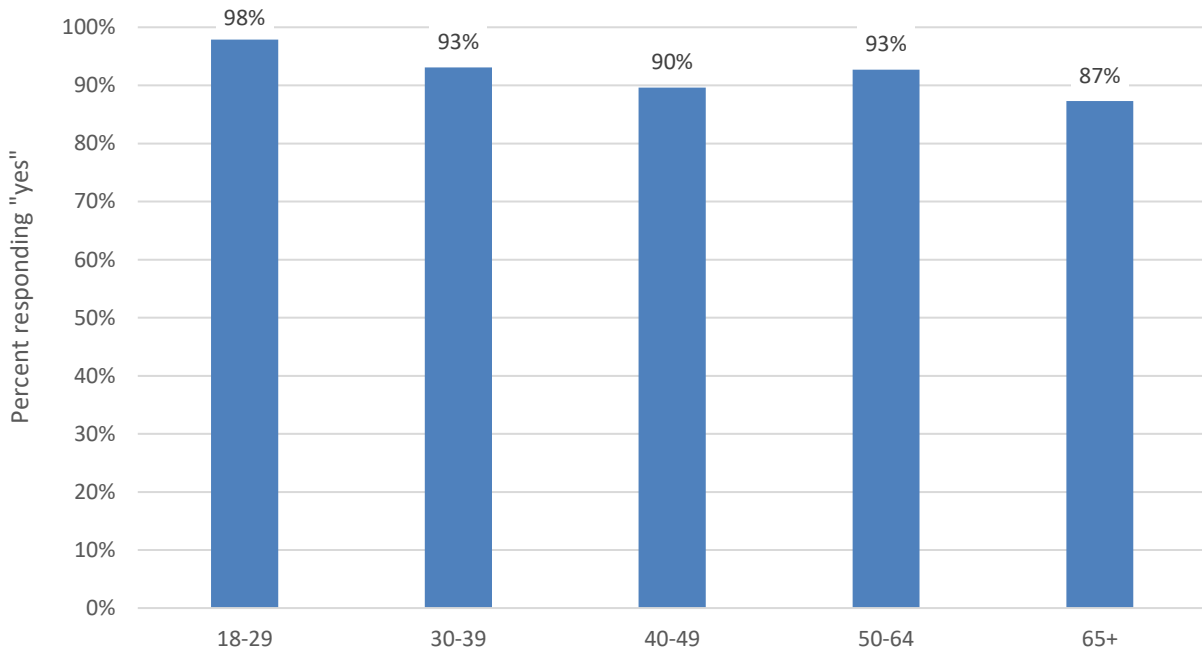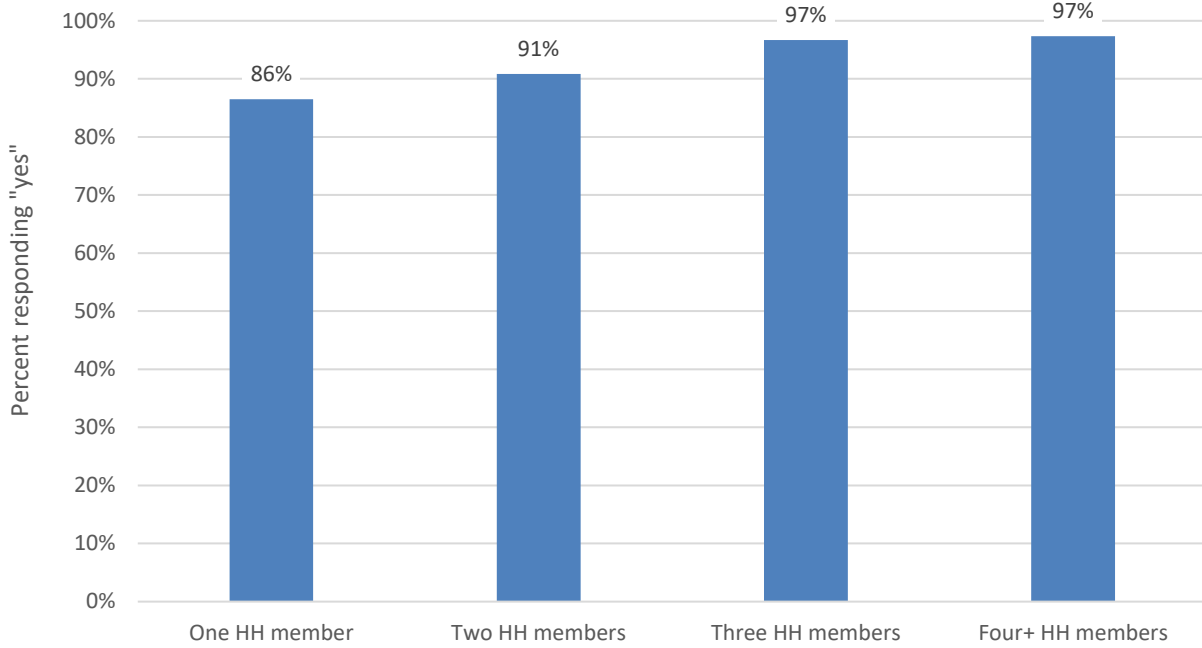

Figure 38. Percent of households that purchase home internet service by children in household (at least one household member under age 18)
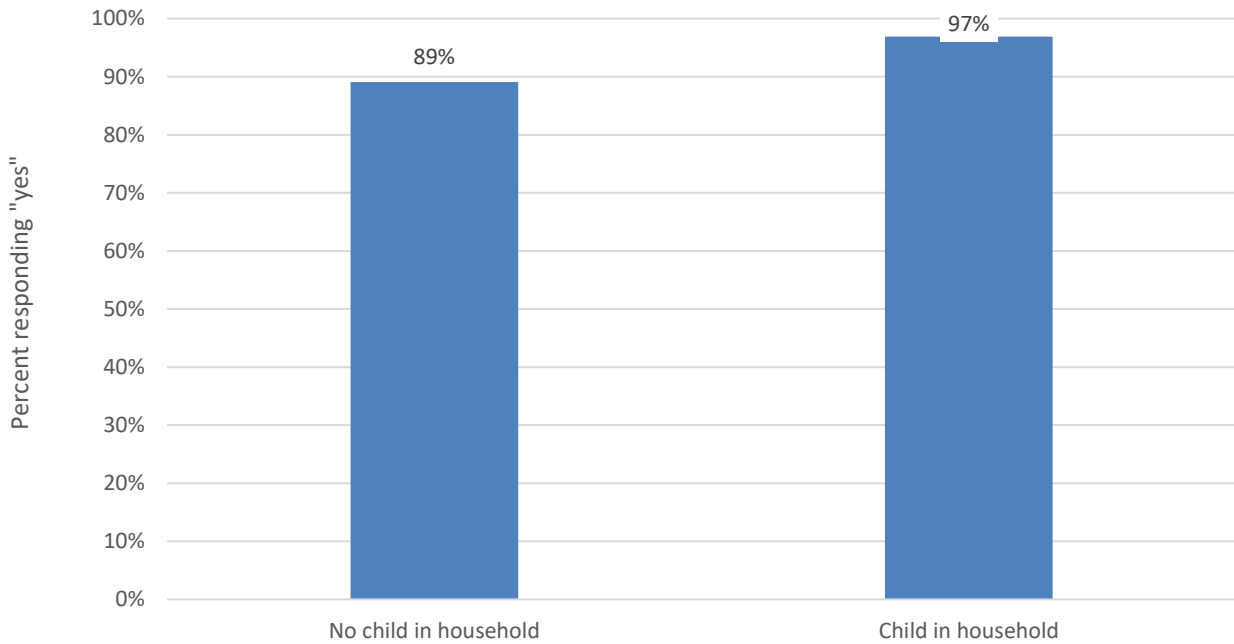
Figure 39. Percent of households that purchase home internet service by seniors in household (at least one household member age 65 or older)

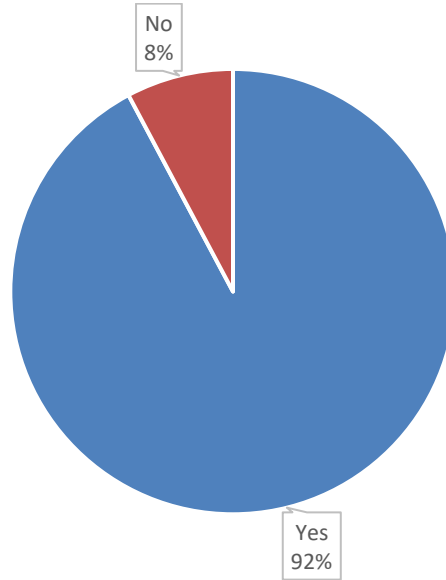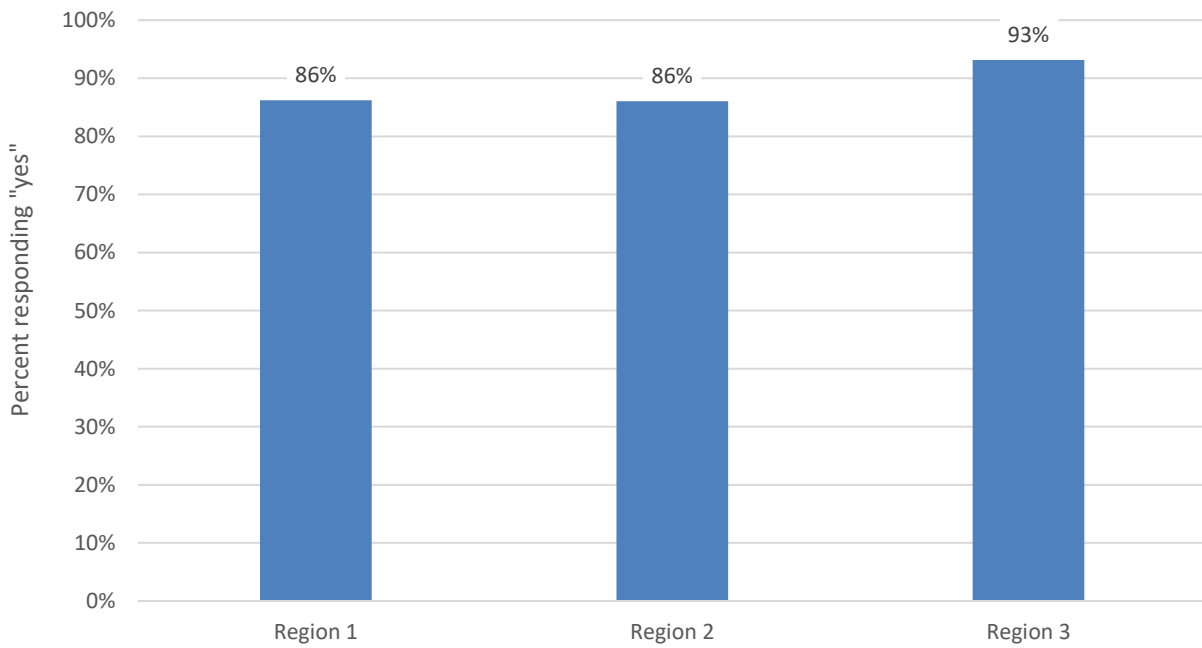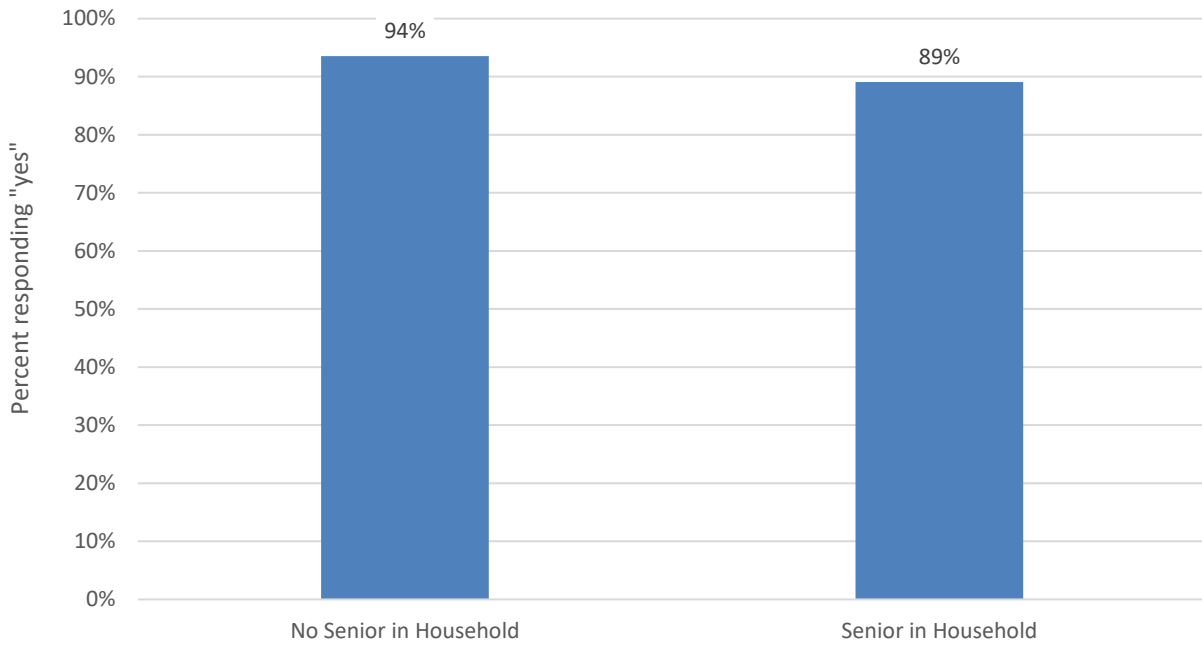**Figure 40. Percent of households that purchase home internet service by respondent age**
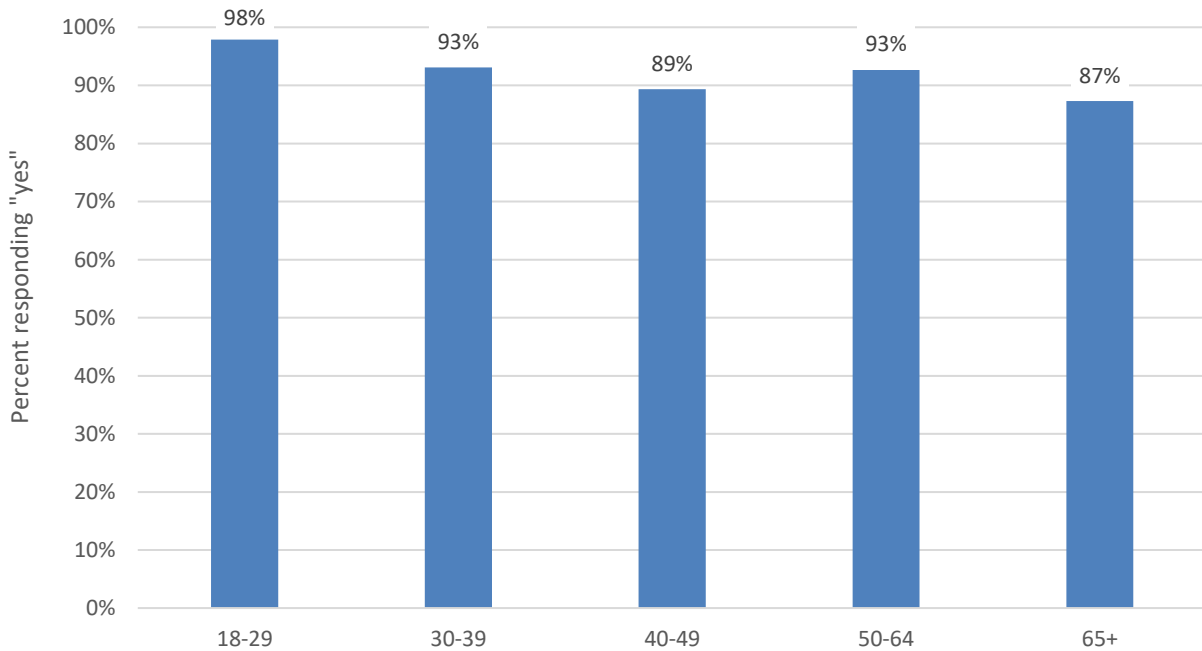
We understand that you don't purchase a home internet service. If you access the internet at home in other ways, which of the following about your service at home is correct:

Figure 41. Percent of households without home internet service who access the internet in other ways
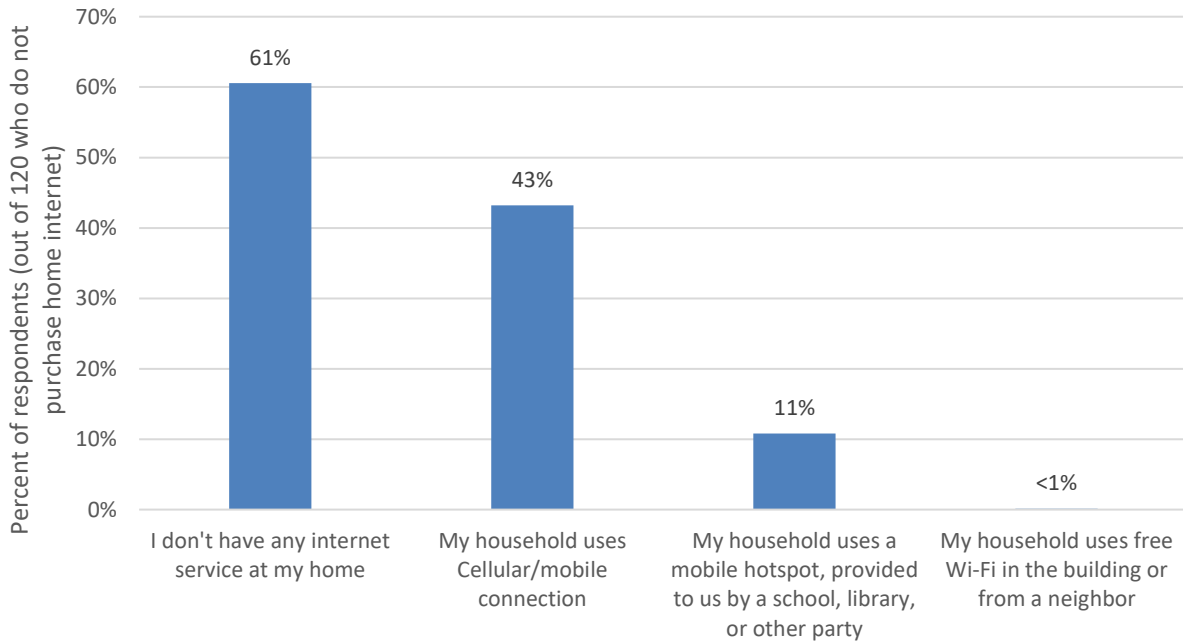
What are the reasons why your household does not purchase home internet service?

Figure 42. Reasons households do not purchase home internet service

Reason	Percent
I cannot afford it	28%
Home internet service is not available in my area	28%
My household recently moved or is in the process of moving	16%
I don't need or am not interested in home service	10%
It's not worth the cost	9%
My cellular/mobile connection is sufficient for me	5%
I can receive internet service outside my home	3%
I do not have a computing device, or the device is…	1%
Online privacy or cybersecurity is too high a risk	1%
Other	8%
Not applicable	1%
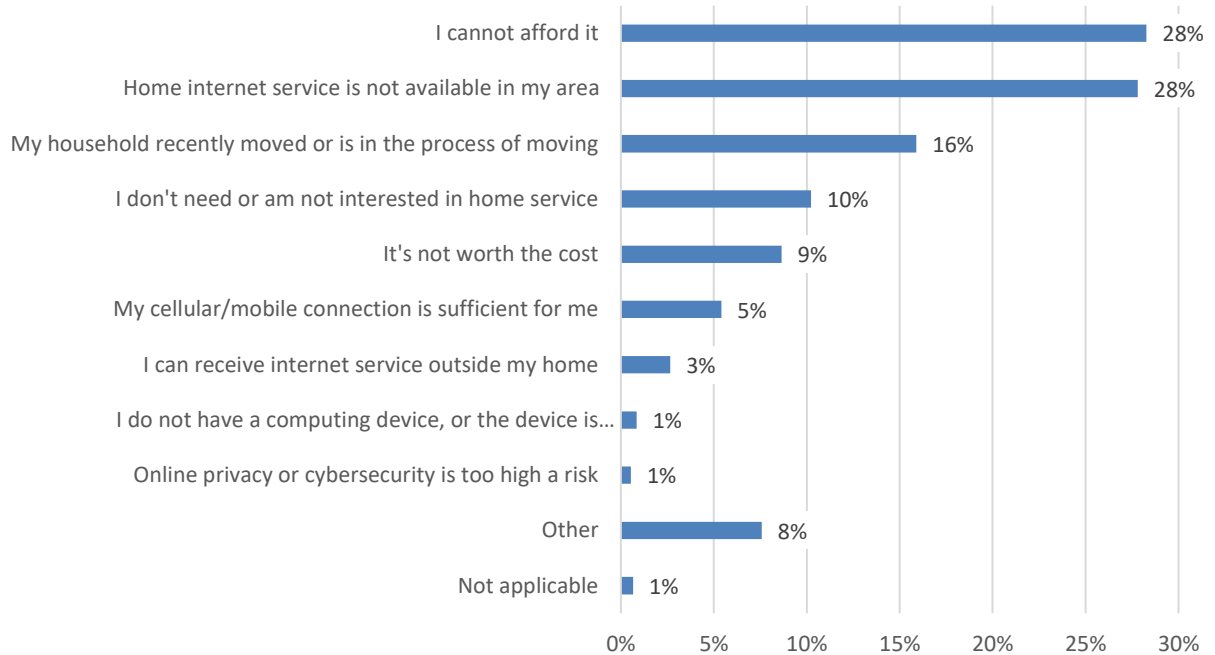
Percent of respondents (out of 121 who do not purchase home internet)

Of the reasons you picked for not purchasing a home internet service, which do you and the members of your household consider to be the most important?

Figure 43. Most important reason households do not purchase home internet service
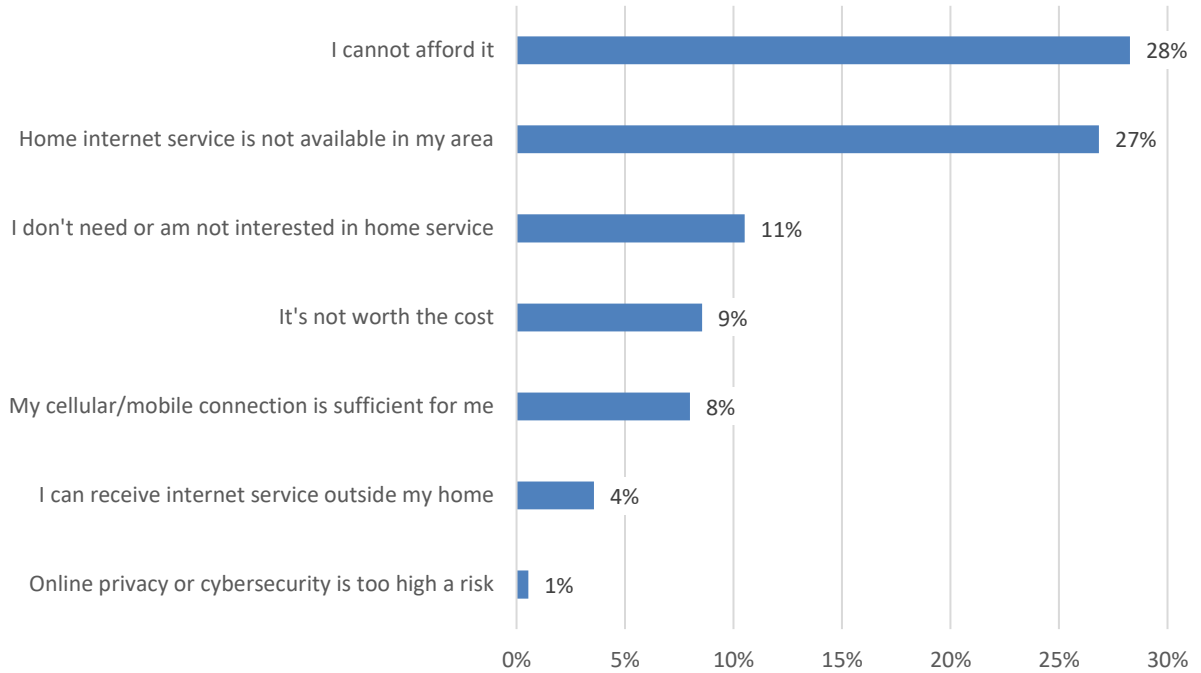
Number of respondents (out of 121 who do not purchase home internet)

How reliable is your home internet service? For example, unreliable service could mean that the service is not available, or experiences sudden drops in speed.

Figure 44. Reliability of home internet service
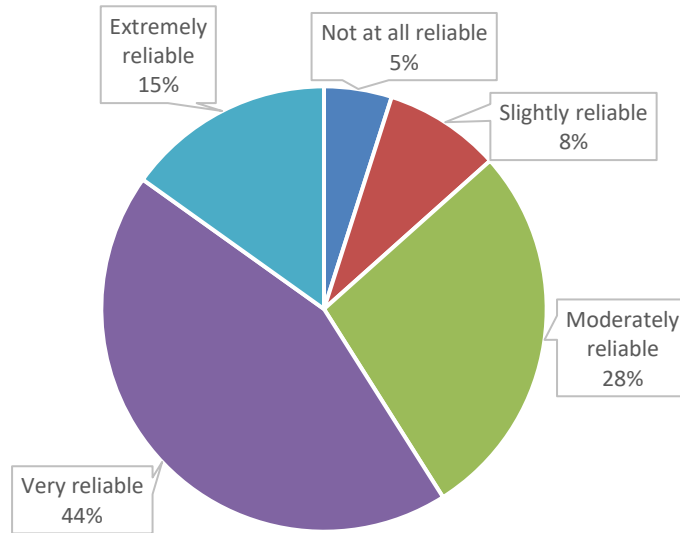
Percent of households with home internet service

Figure 45. Reliability of home internet service by household income
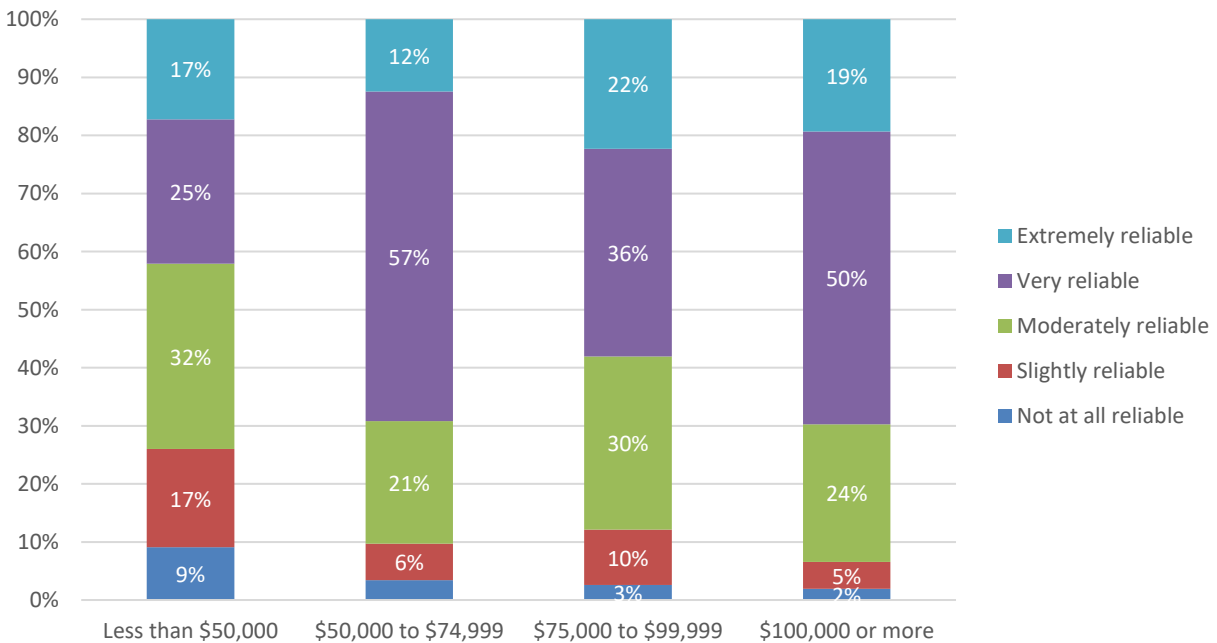
Figure 46. Reliability of home internet service by race/ethnicity
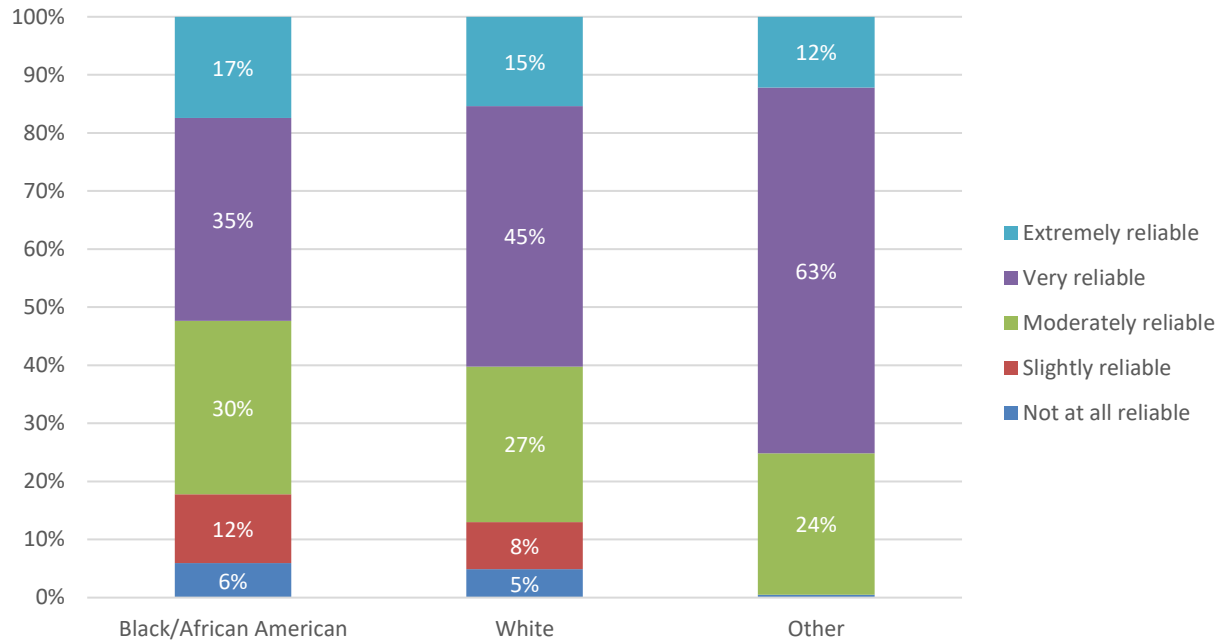
Figure 47. Reliability of home internet service by household size
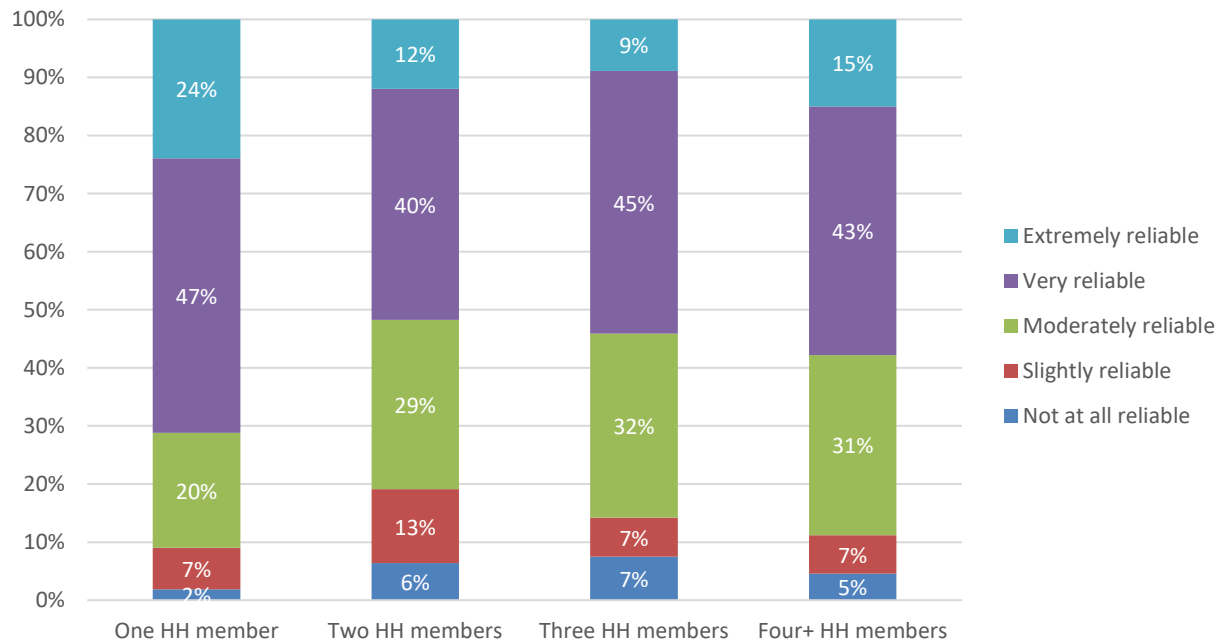
Figure 48. Reliability of home internet service by seniors in household (at least one person age 65+ in the household)
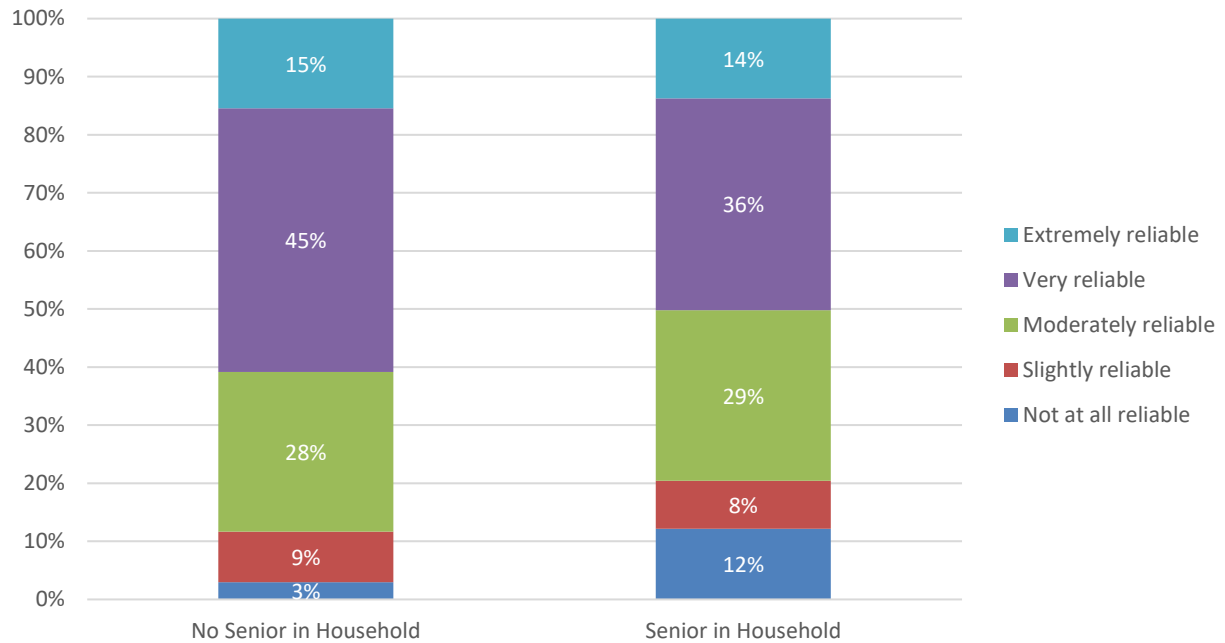
Figure 49. Reliability of home internet service by respondent age
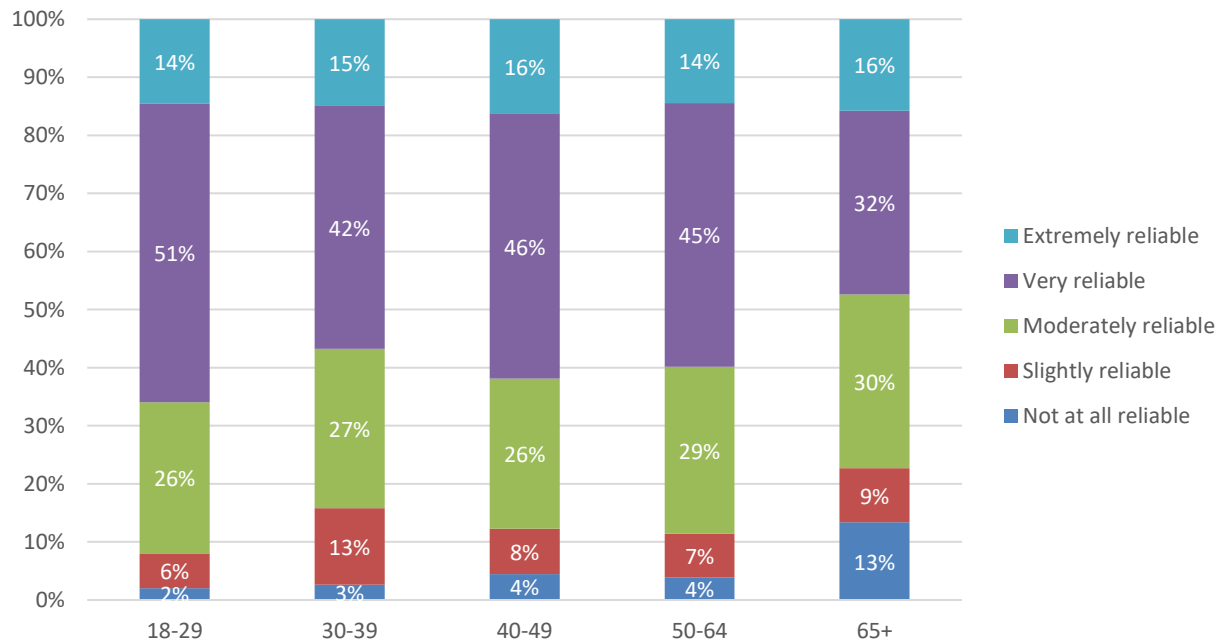
Are you currently enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program, Lifeline, or a subsidy program offered by your internet service provider?

Figure 50. Percent of households with home internet service that are enrolled in subsidy programs
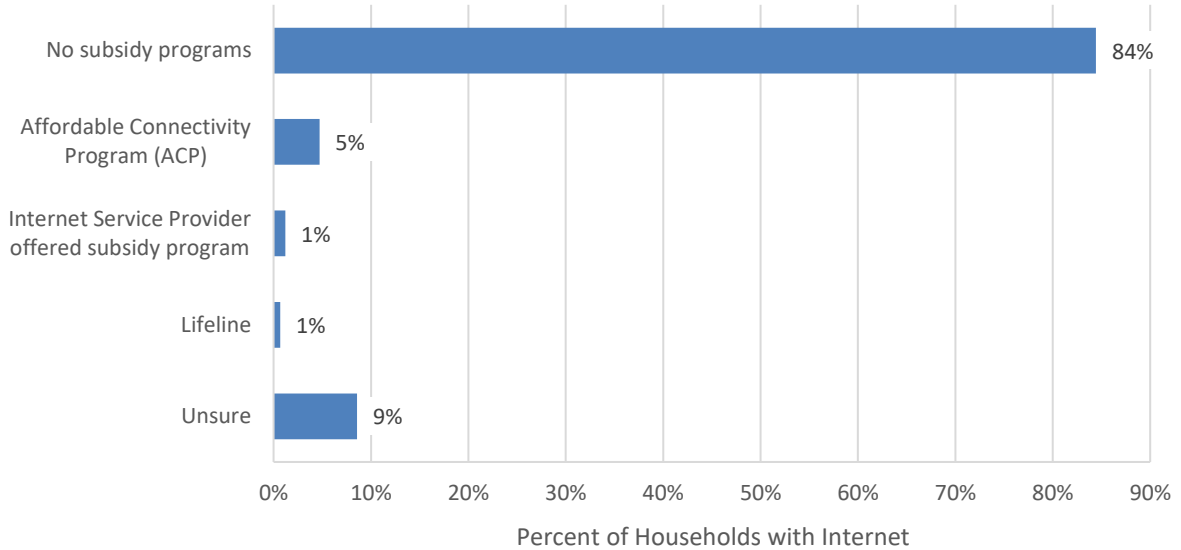
Figure 51. Percent of households with home internet service that are enrolled in subsidy programs by household income
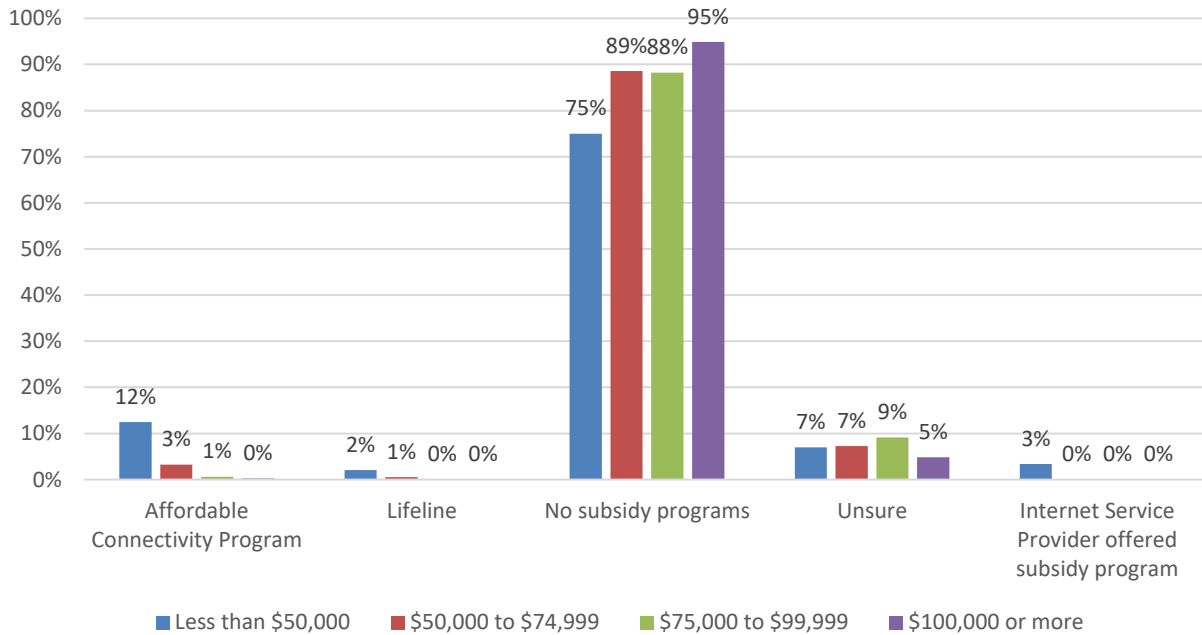
Please estimate how much you pay per month for your home internet service.

Figure 52. Monthly cost of home internet service
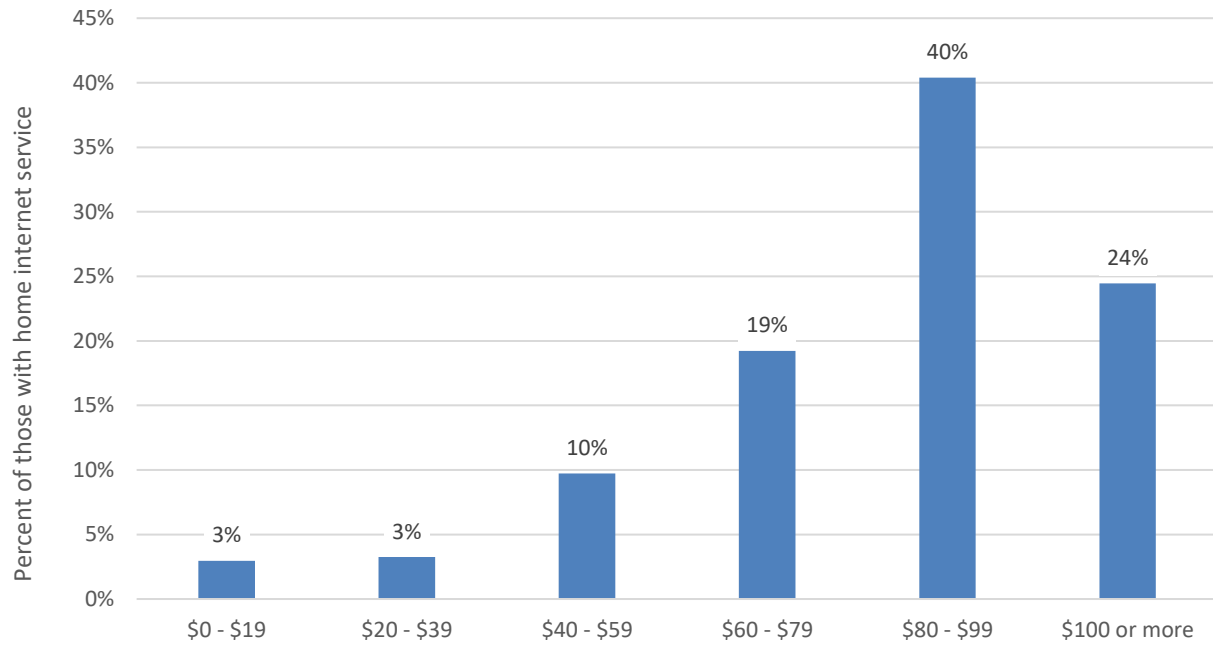
Figure 53. Monthly cost of home internet service by household income
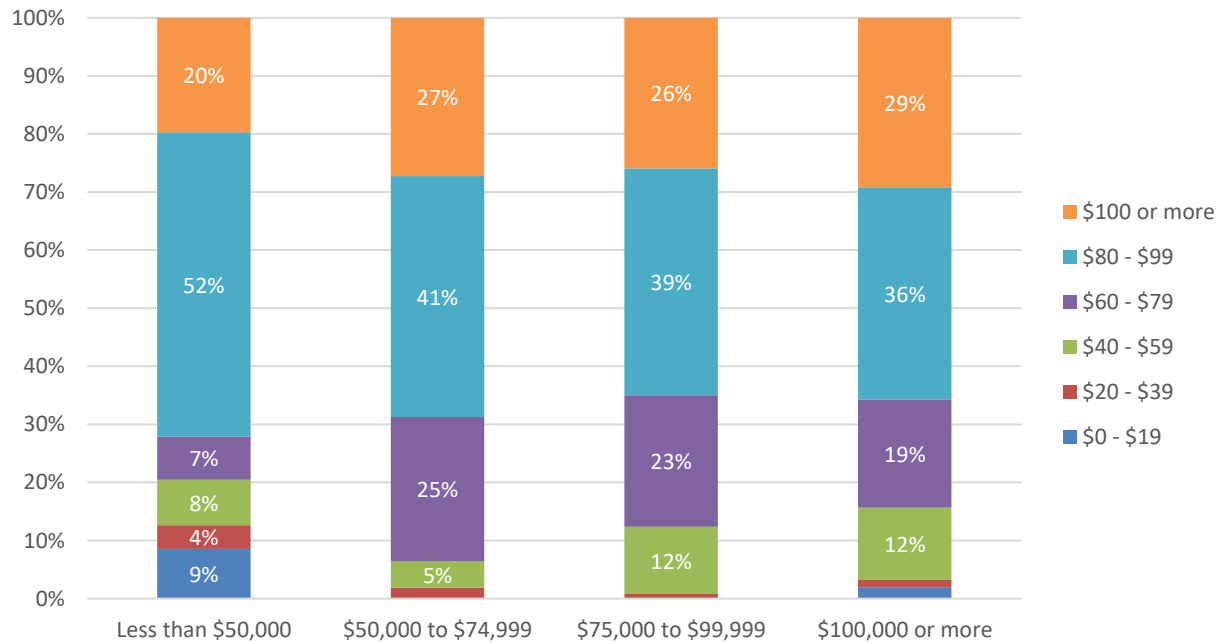
Please estimate how much you are willing to pay per month for high-speed, reliable home internet service.

Figure 54. Amount willing to pay for high-speed, reliable home internet service
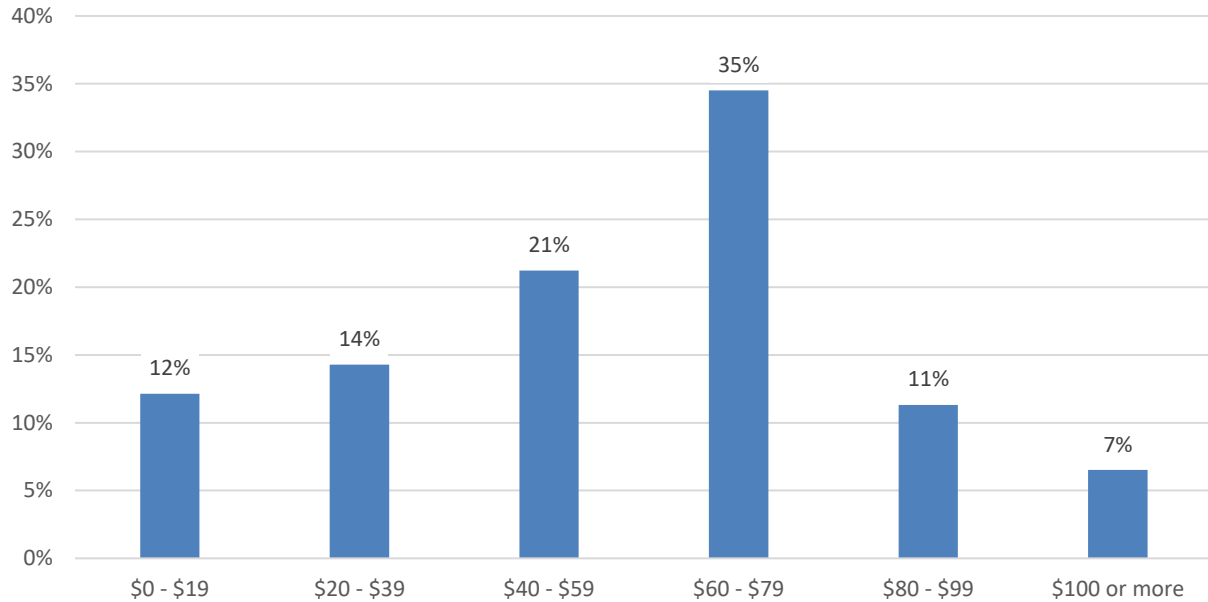
Figure 55. Amount willing to pay for high-speed, reliable home internet service by household income
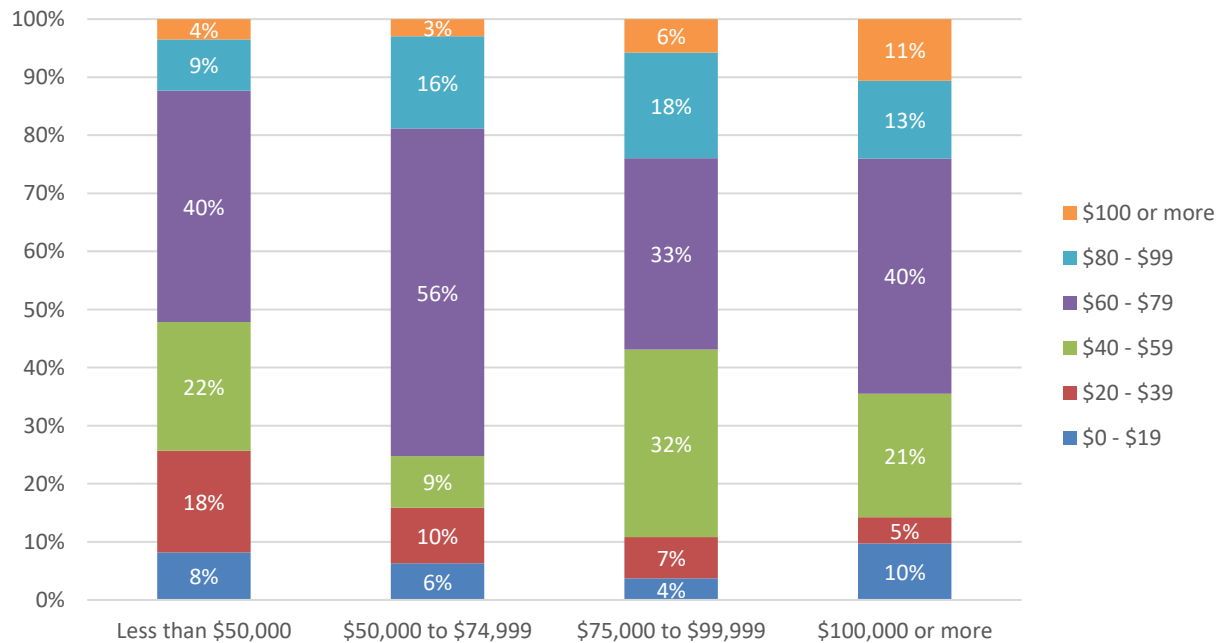
Internet devices questions
For each of the following devices, how many does your household use that are in good working condition?

Figure 56. Number of computing devices in the household
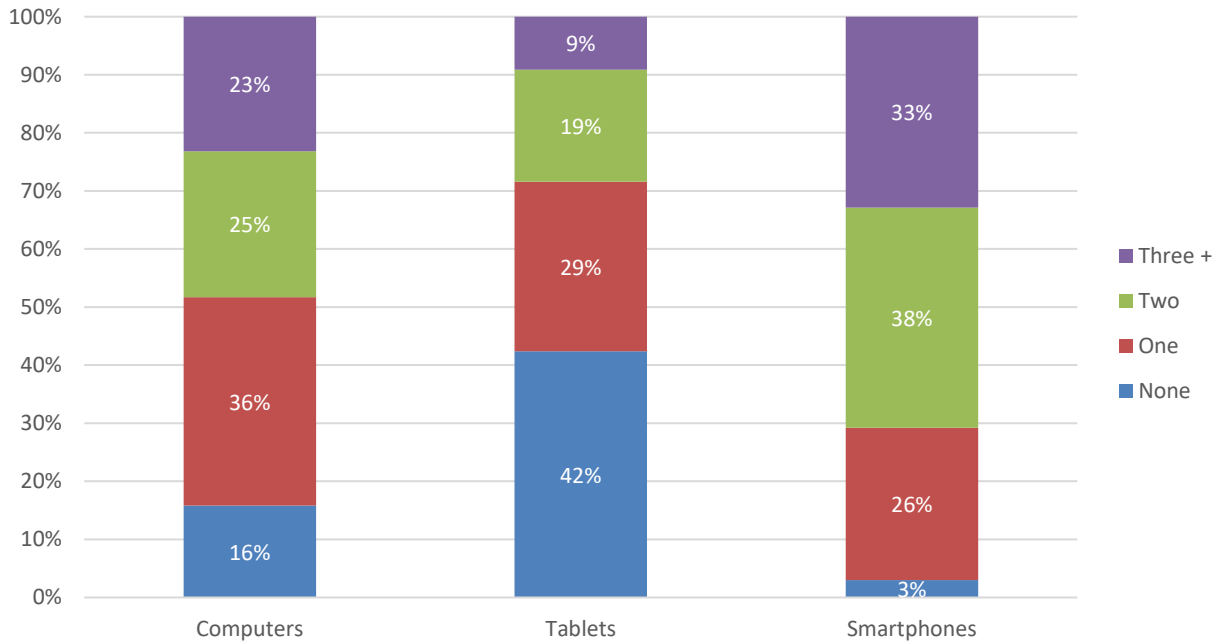
Figure 57. Average number of computing devices in the household (among households with at least one device)
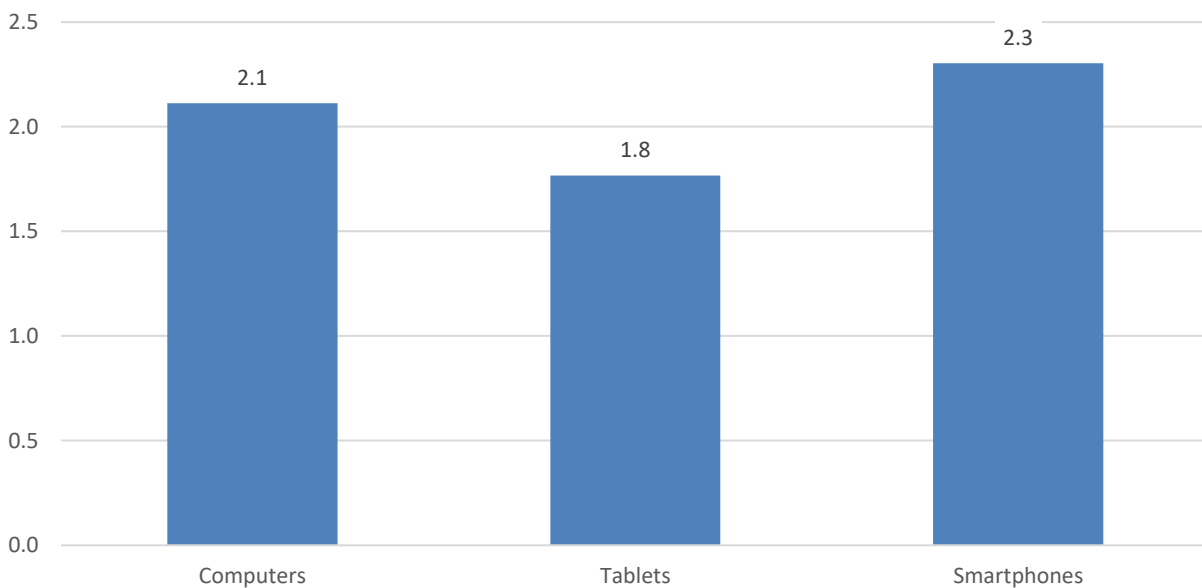
Table 48. Number of computing devices by household income

		Less than $50,000	$50,000 to $74,999	$75,000 to $99,999	$100,000 or more
Computers	None	19%	16%	8%	5%
	One	48%	36%	38%	14%
	Two	21%	30%	25%	32%
	Three or more	12%	19%	29%	49%
	Total Weighted Count	355	199	159	301
Tablets	None	50%	61%	36%	25%
	One	30%	25%	35%	25%
	Two	14%	13%	22%	29%
	Three or more	6%	1%	7%	21%
	Total Weighted Count	355	199	159	301
Smartphones	None	7%	0%	1%	0%
	One	42%	35%	14%	13%
	Two	32%	38%	47%	37%
	Three or more	19%	27%	37%	50%
	Total Weighted Count	355	199	159	301

Figure 58. Number of computers by household income
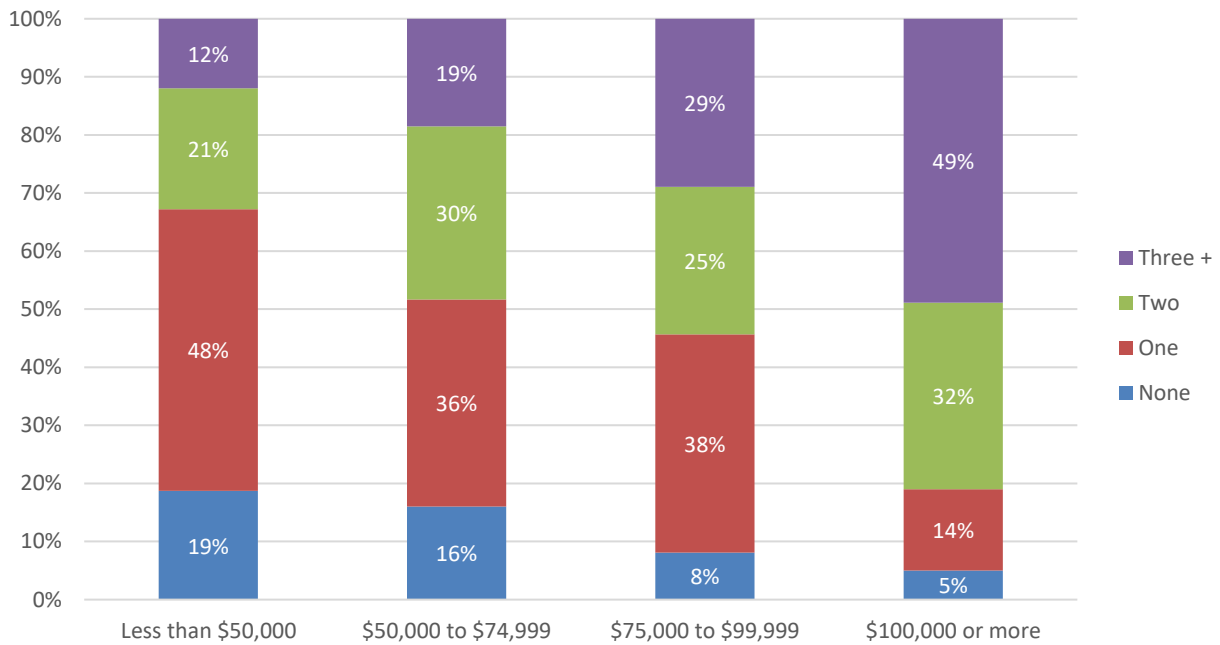
Figure 59. Number of tablets by household income
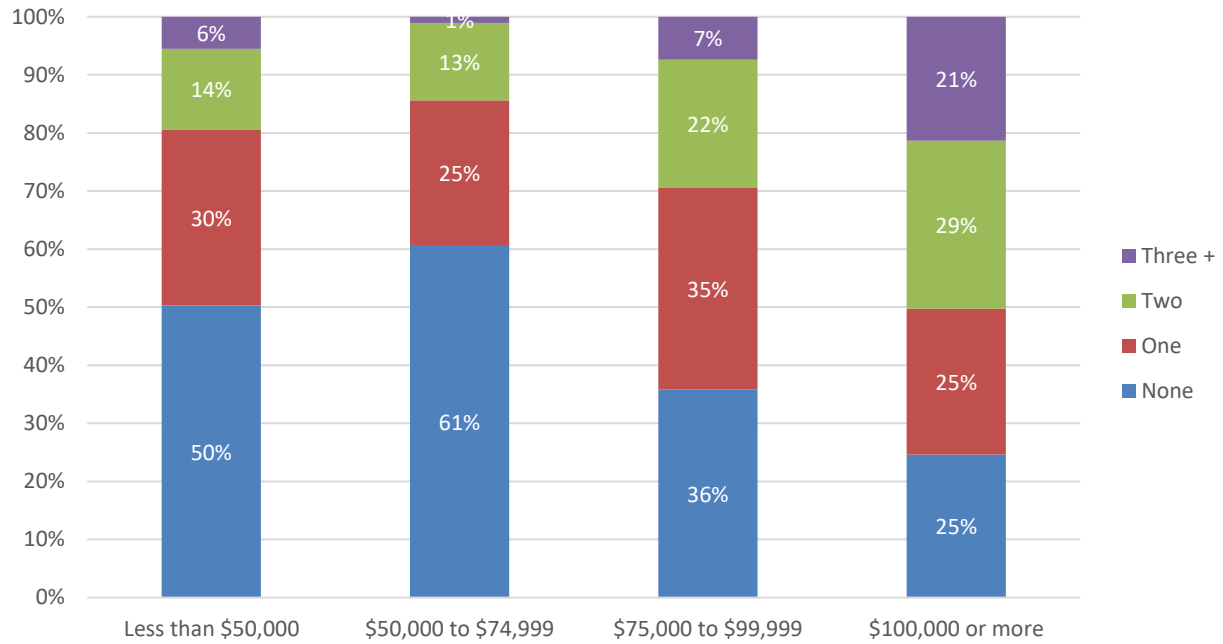
Figure 60. Number of smartphones by household income
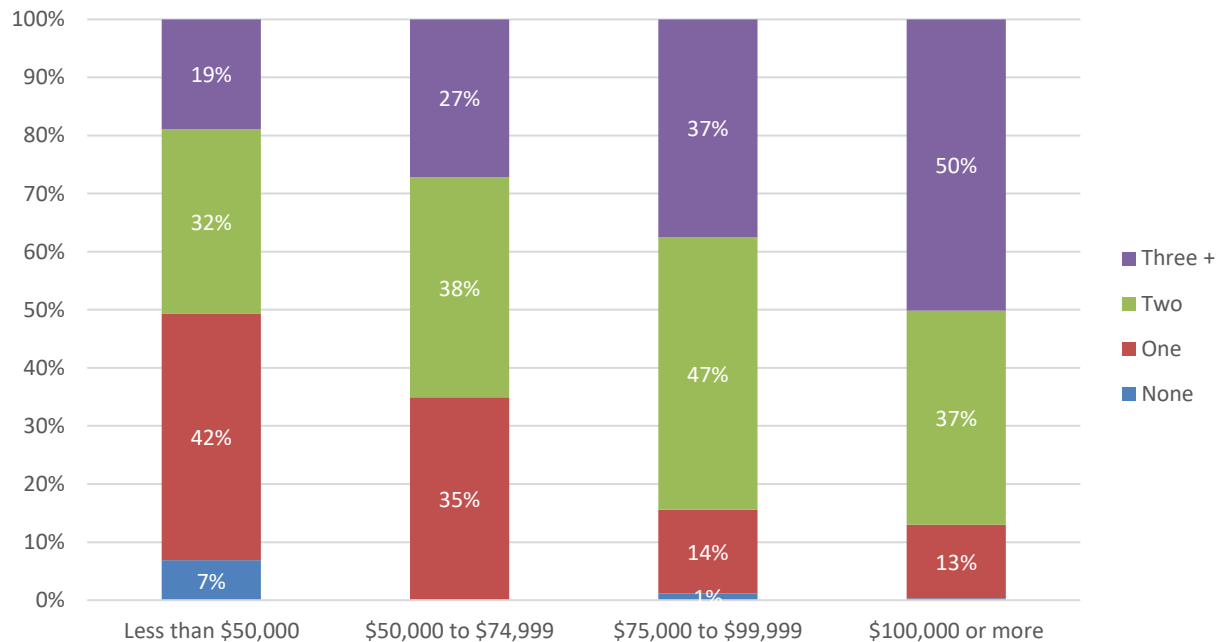
Table 49. Number of computing devices by race/ethnicity

		Black/African American	White	Other
Computers	None	17%	11%	26%
	One	42%	34%	13%
	Two	22%	31%	15%
	Three or more	19%	24%	47%
	Total Weighted Count	471	739	156
Tablets	None	40%	42%	43%
	One	33%	29%	18%
	Two	19%	21%	17%
	Three or more	7%	8%	22%
	Total Weighted Count	471	739	156
Smartphones	None	2%	3%	0%
	One	32%	20%	38%
	Two	33%	44%	15%
	Three or more	32%	33%	48%
	Total Weighted Count	471	739	156

Figure 61. Number of computers by race/ethnicity
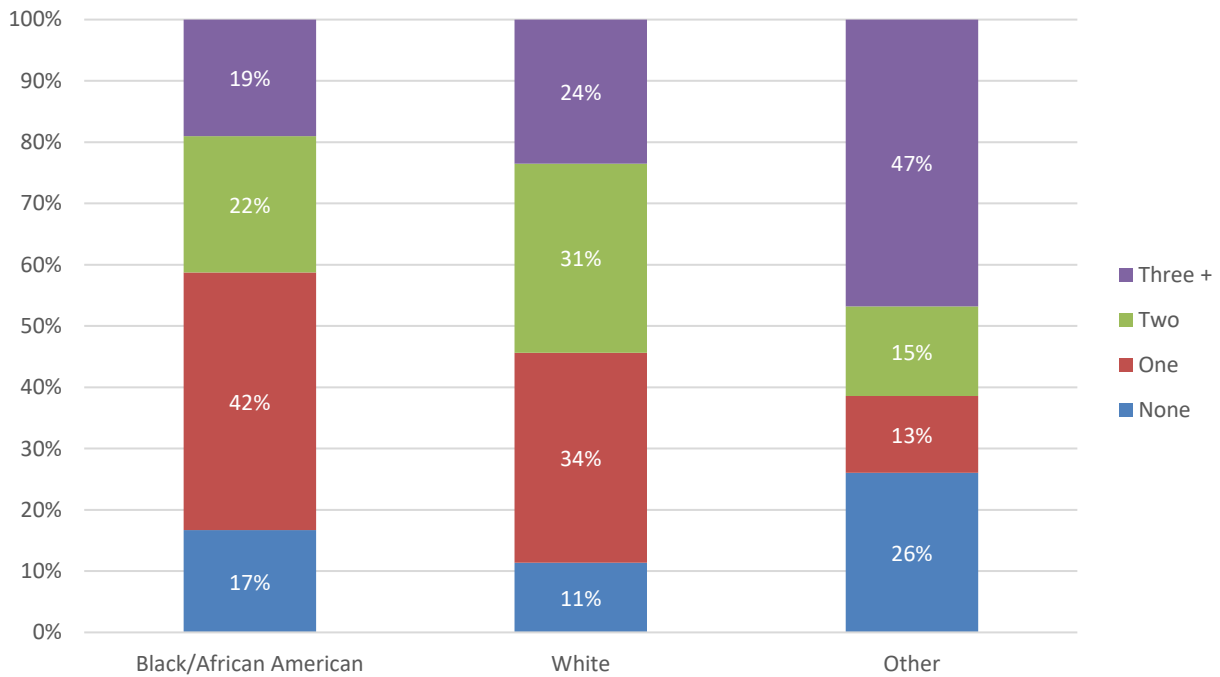
Figure 62. Number of tablets by race/ethnicity
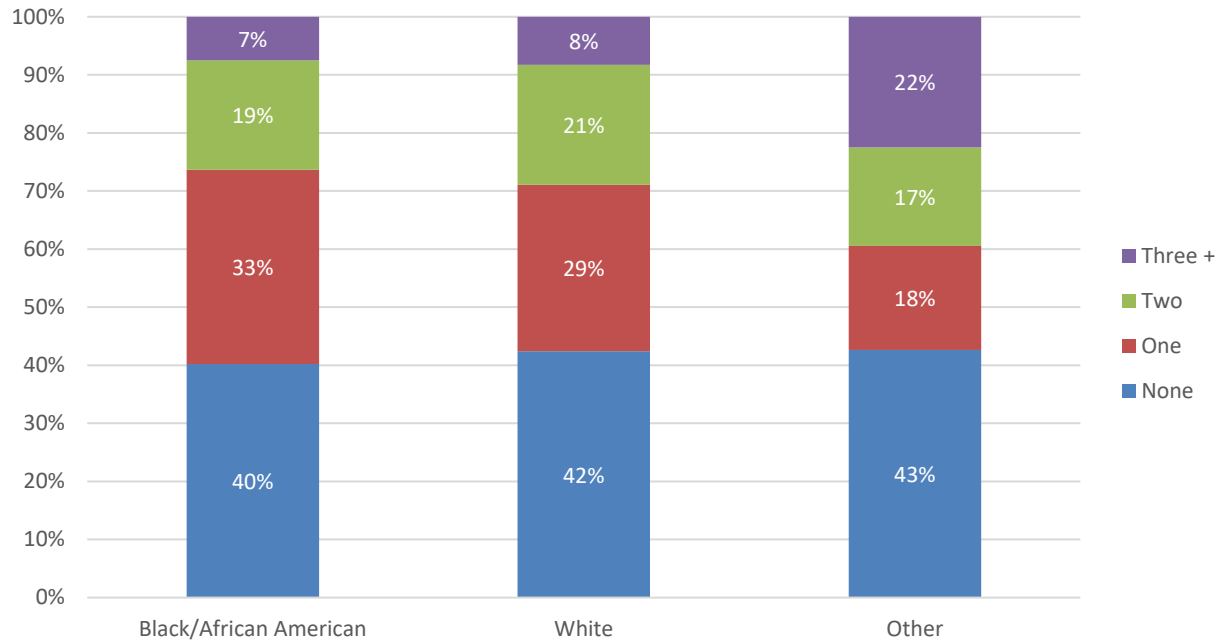
Figure 63. Number of smartphones by race/ethnicity
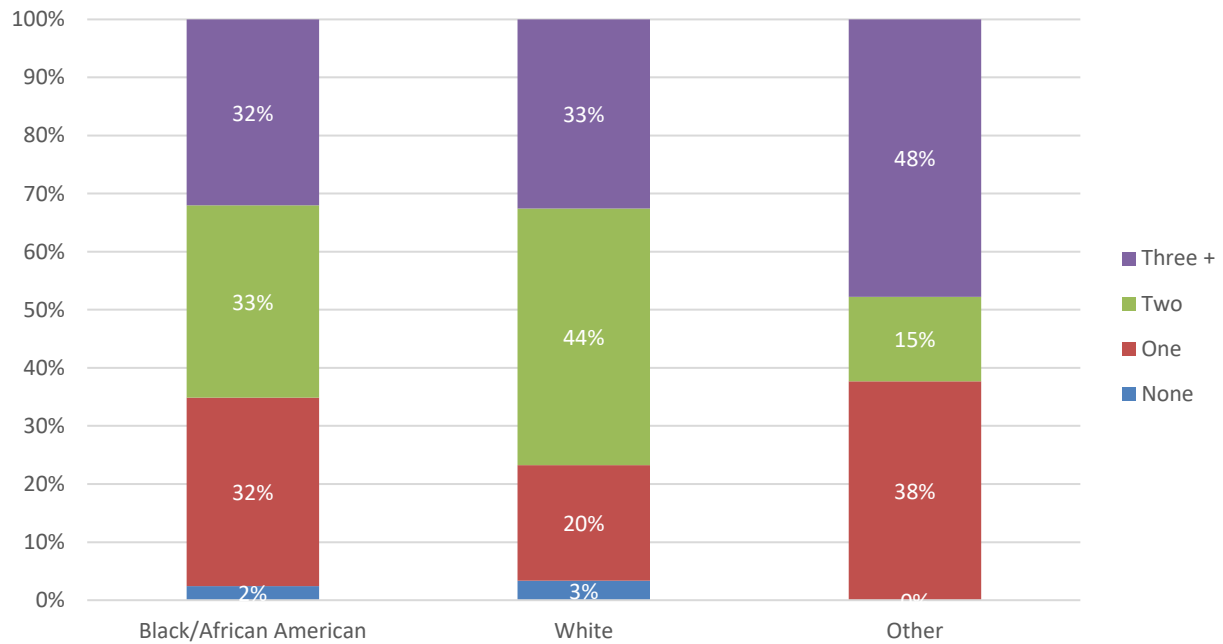
Table 50. Number of computing devices in at-risk households

		Veteran	Individual with a disability	Primarily non-English speaker	Formerly incarcerated individual	Actively enrolled in K-12 school or college or other higher education
Computers	None	9%	19%	0%	57%	12%
	One	33%	34%	18%	15%	27%
	Two	28%	18%	15%	25%	26%
	Three or more	30%	29%	67%	3%	35%
	Total Weighted Count	196	243	18	43	654
Tablets	None	34%	36%	23%	56%	34%
	One	29%	29%	1%	22%	26%
	Two	25%	20%	0%	12%	27%
	Three or more	12%	16%	77%	10%	14%
	Total Weighted Count	196	243	18	43	654
Smartphones	None	1%	6%	0%	0%	2%
	One	14%	19%	18%	55%	19%
	Two	42%	30%	24%	16%	30%
	Three or more	43%	44%	57%	29%	49%
	Total Weighted Count	196	243	18	43	654

Figure 64. Number of computers by student in household
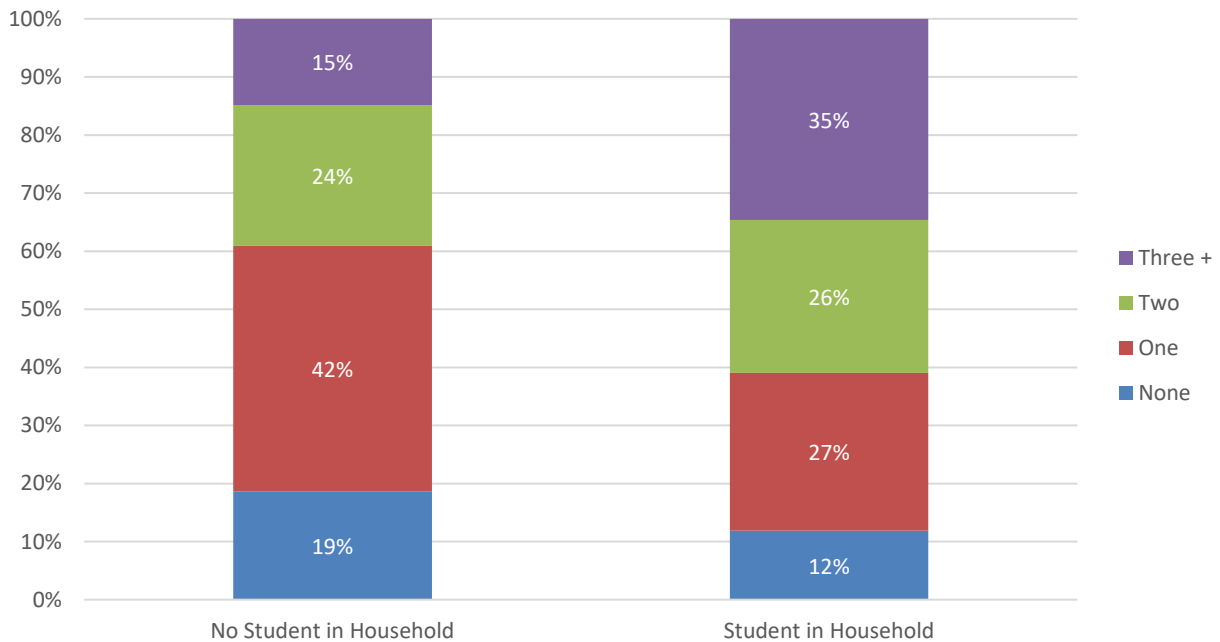
Figure 65. Number of tablets by student in household
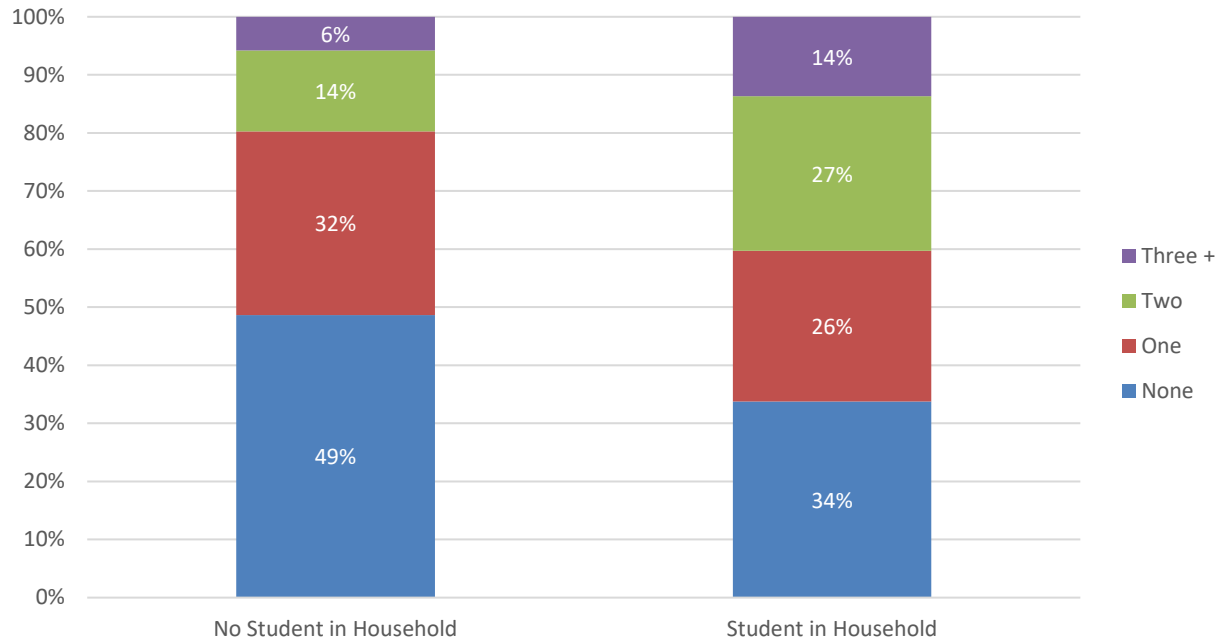
Figure 66. Number of smartphones by student in household
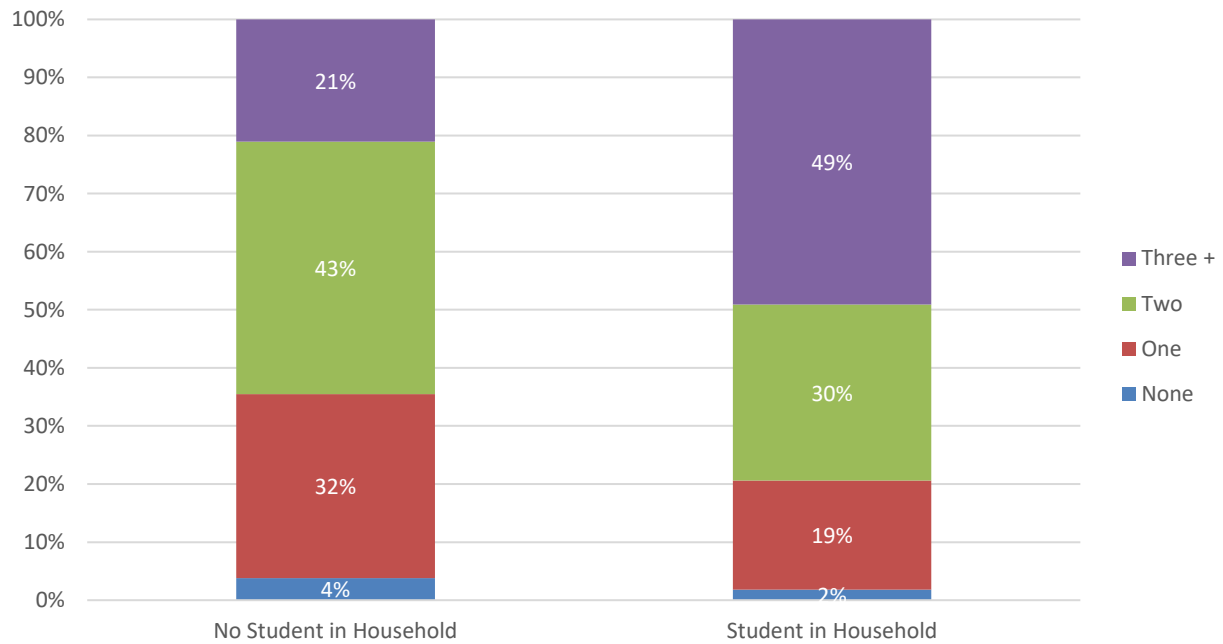
Table 51. Number of computing devices by household size

		One household member	Two household members	Three household members	Four+ household members
Computers	None	27%	16%	8%	7%
	One	61%	37%	27%	18%
	Two	9%	36%	35%	24%
	Three or more	3%	11%	31%	52%
	Total Weighted Count	383	457	267	403
Tablets	None	61%	45%	30%	26%
	One	30%	36%	33%	20%
	Two	8%	18%	24%	30%
	Three or more	1%	1%	13%	24%
	Total Weighted Count	383	457	267	403
Smartphones	None	4%	2%	4%	1%
	One	76%	15%	4%	4%
	Two	15%	70%	38%	25%
	Three or more	5%	12%	54%	71%
	Total Weighted Count	383	457	267	403

Figure 67. Number of computers by household size
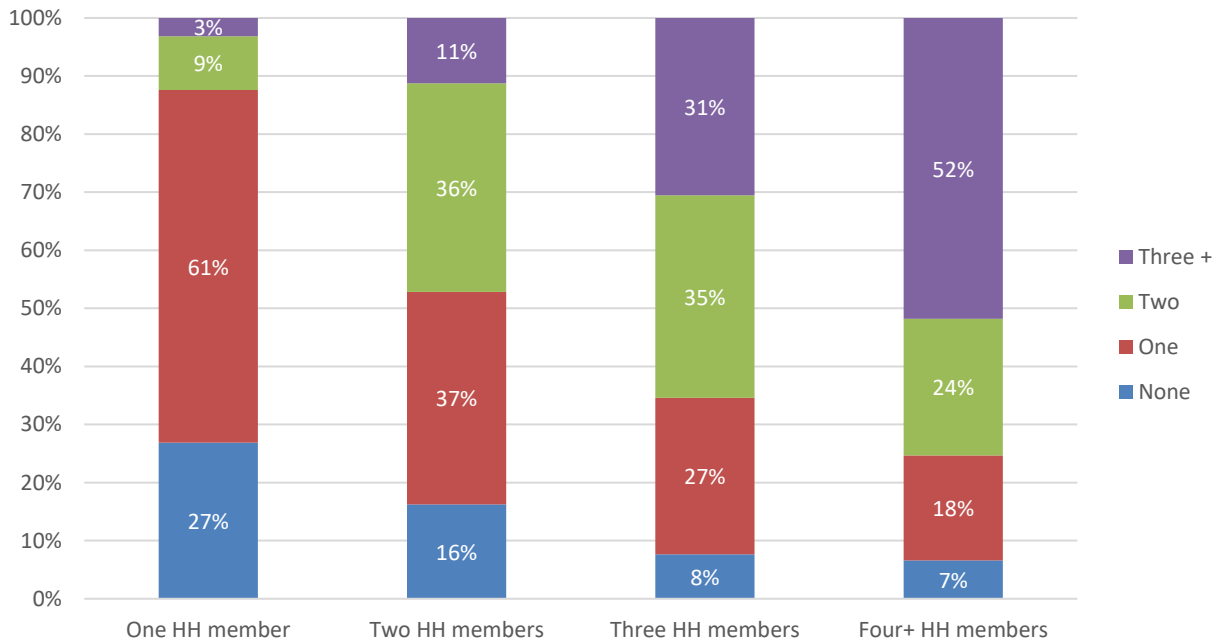
Figure 68. Number of tablets by household size
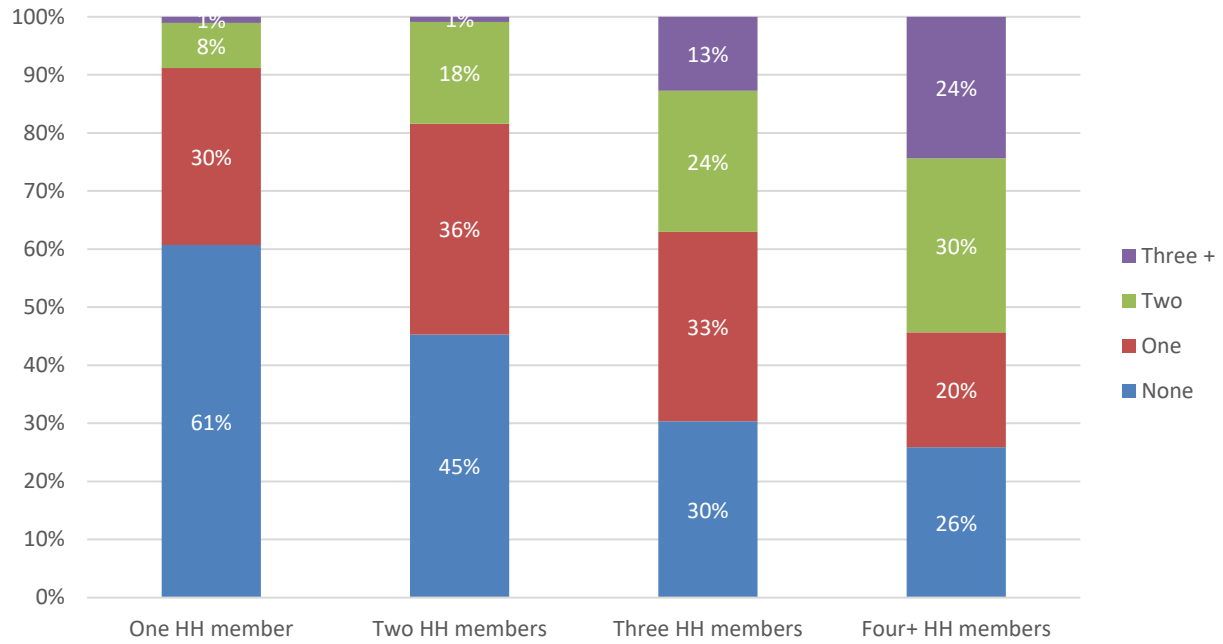
Figure 69. Number of smartphones by household size
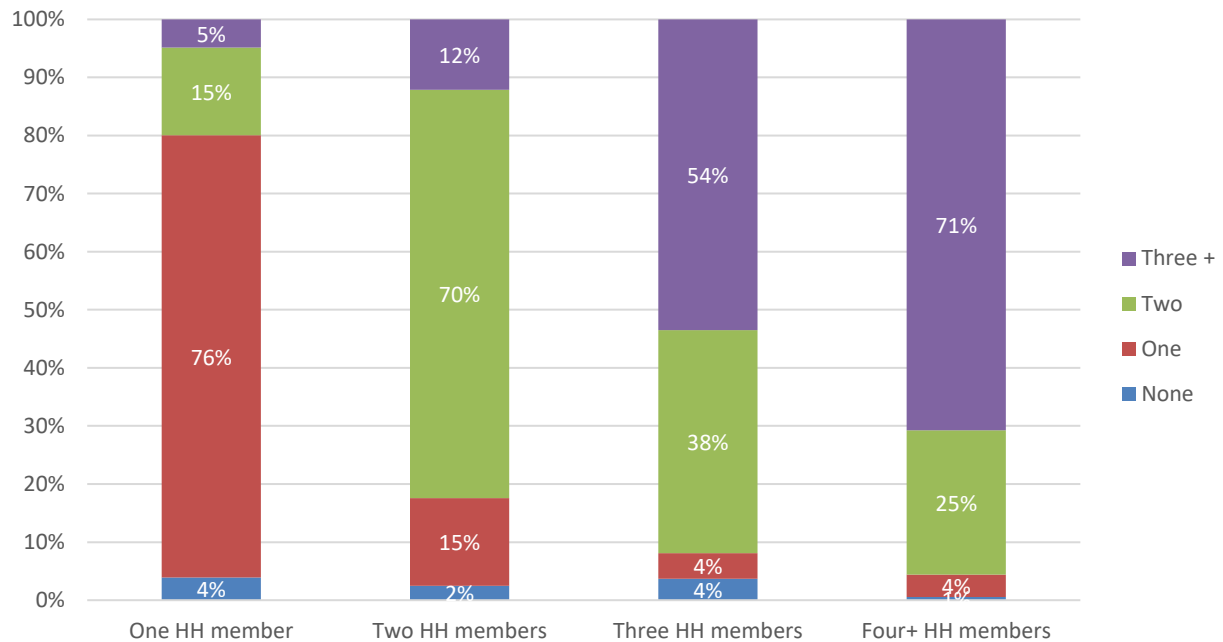
Table 52. Number of computing devices by ages of householders (percent of households with at least one householder in each age group)

		Under 18	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+
Computers	None	12%	7%	6%	14%	15%	15%
	One	31%	32%	30%	25%	26%	41%
	Two	26%	26%	29%	29%	23%	24%
	Three or more	31%	35%	34%	33%	36%	20%
	Total Weighted Count	663	363	333	353	439	346
Tablets	None	33%	41%	29%	33%	33%	48%
	One	26%	25%	34%	31%	28%	29%
	Two	26%	22%	20%	25%	27%	14%
	Three or more	15%	11%	17%	11%	12%	9%
	Total Weighted Count	663	363	333	353	439	346
Smartphones	None	3%	0%	2%	1%	2%	6%
	One	17%	14%	20%	16%	14%	28%
	Two	34%	34%	38%	34%	35%	43%
	Three or more	47%	52%	40%	49%	49%	23%
	Total Weighted Count	663	363	333	353	439	346

Figure 70. Number of computers by children in household (at least one household member under age 18)
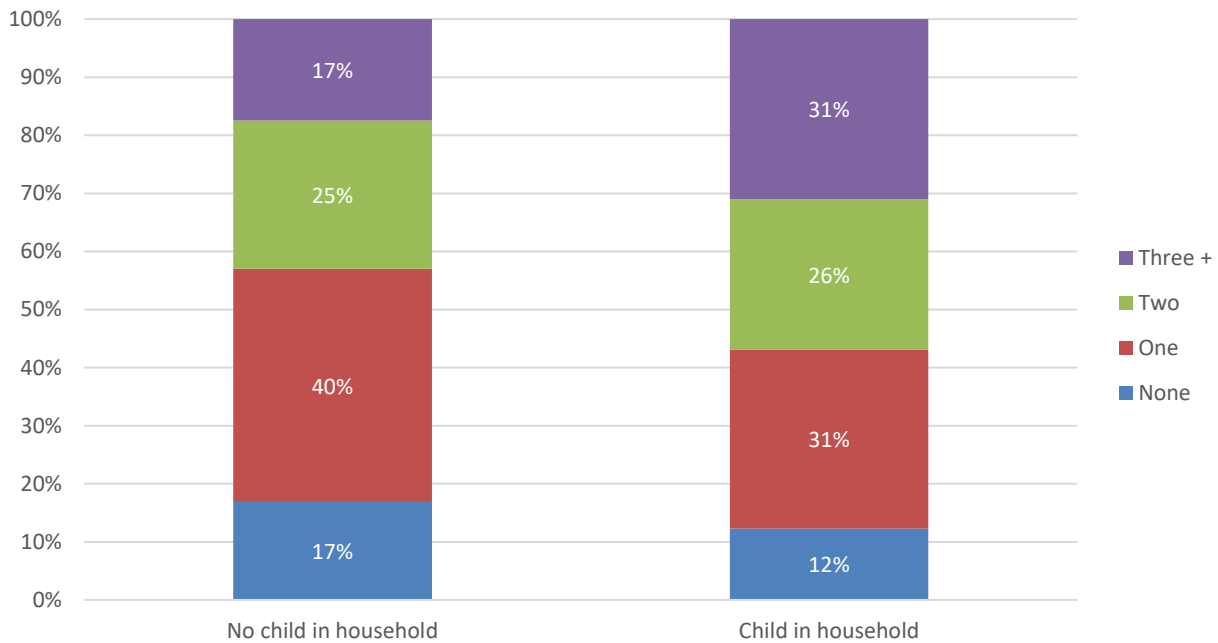
Figure 71. Number of tablets by children in household (at least one household member under age 18)

Legend:
- Three + (purple)
- Two (green)
- One (red)
- None (blue)

No child in household:
- None: 48%
- One: 32%
- Two: 15%
- Three +: 5%

Child in household:
- None: 33%
- One: 26%
- Two: 26%
- Three +: 15%
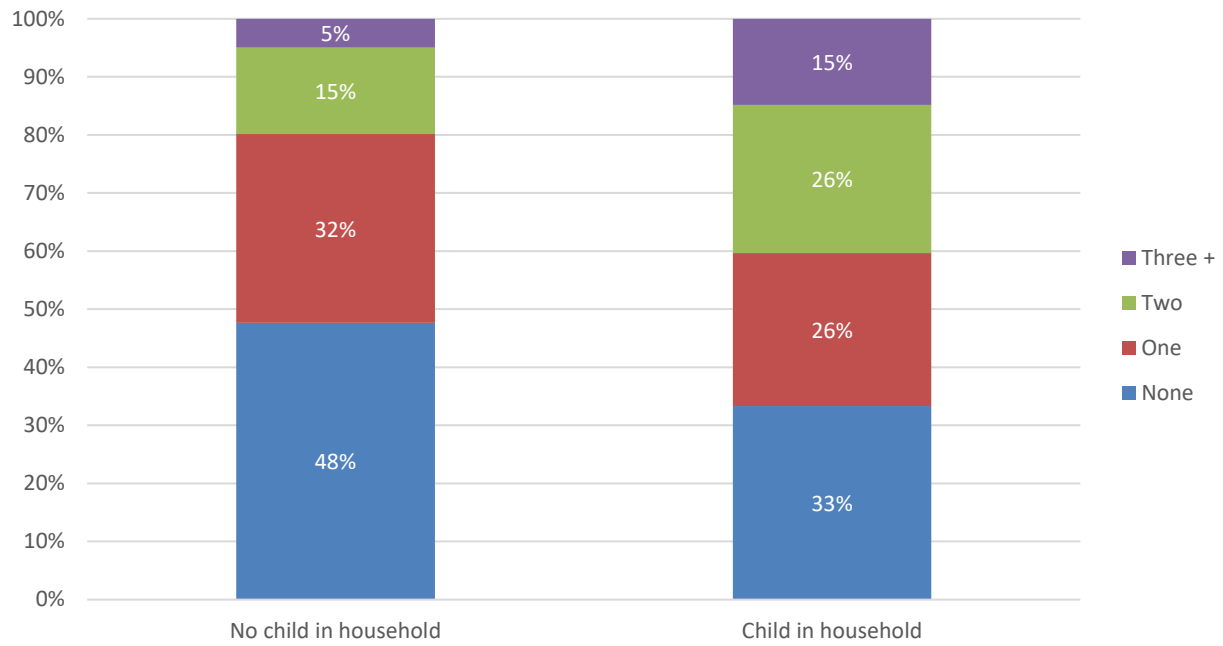
Figure 72. Number of smartphones by children in household (at least one household member under age 18)

Legend:
- Three + (purple)
- Two (green)
- One (red)
- None (blue)

No child in household:
- None: 2%
- One: 33%
- Two: 42%
- Three +: 22%

Child in household:
- None: 3%
- One: 17%
- Two: 34%
- Three +: 47%
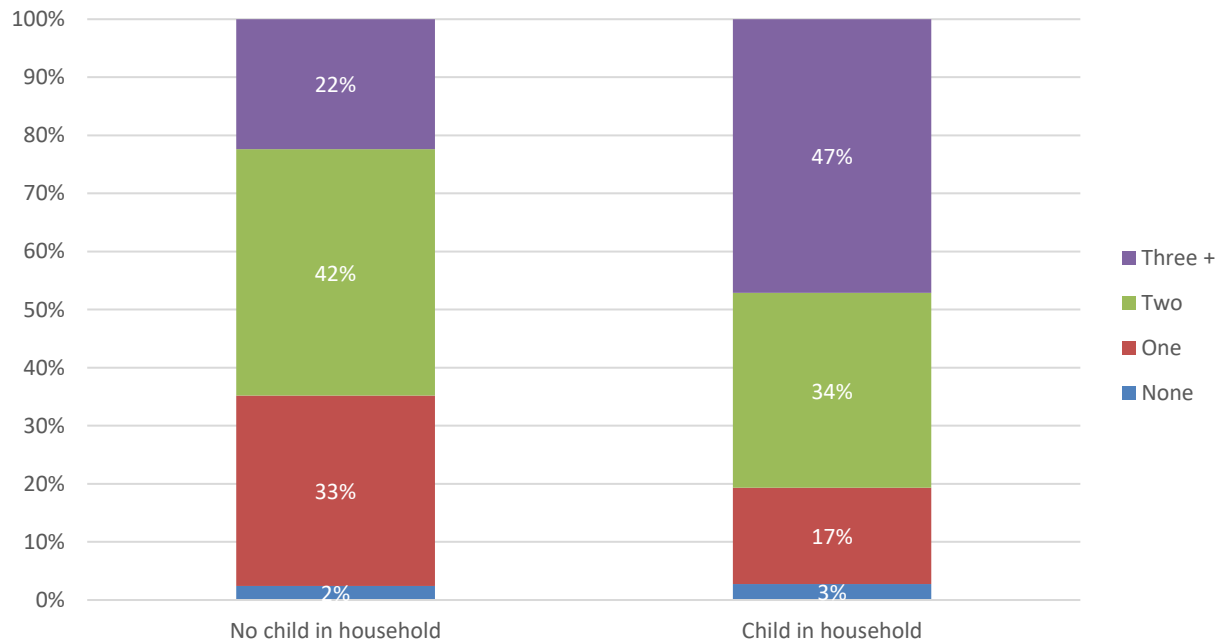
Figure 73. Number of computers by seniors in household (at least one household member age 65 or older)
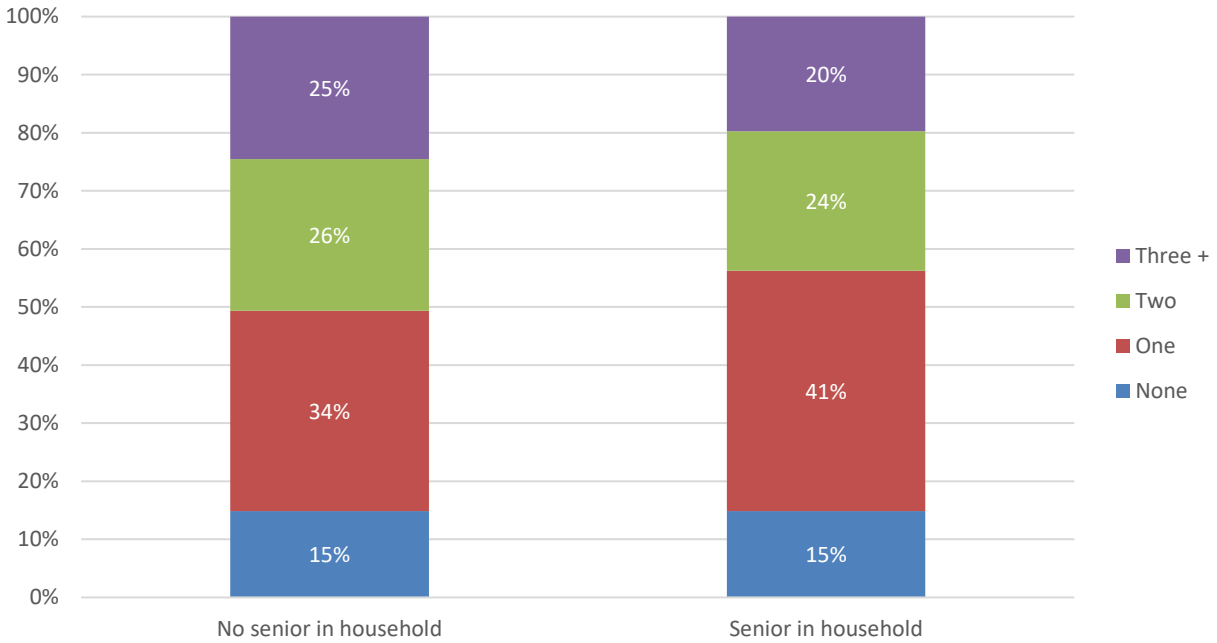
Figure 74. Number of tablets by seniors in household (at least one household member age 65 or older)
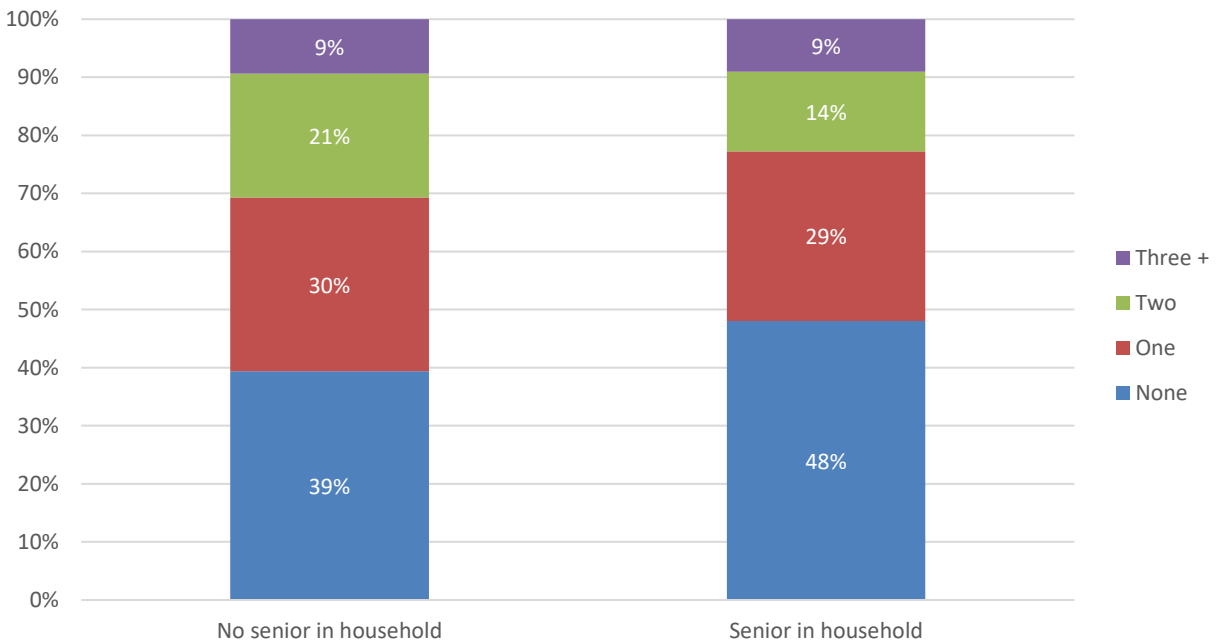
Figure 75. Number of smartphones by seniors in household (at least one household member age 65 or older)
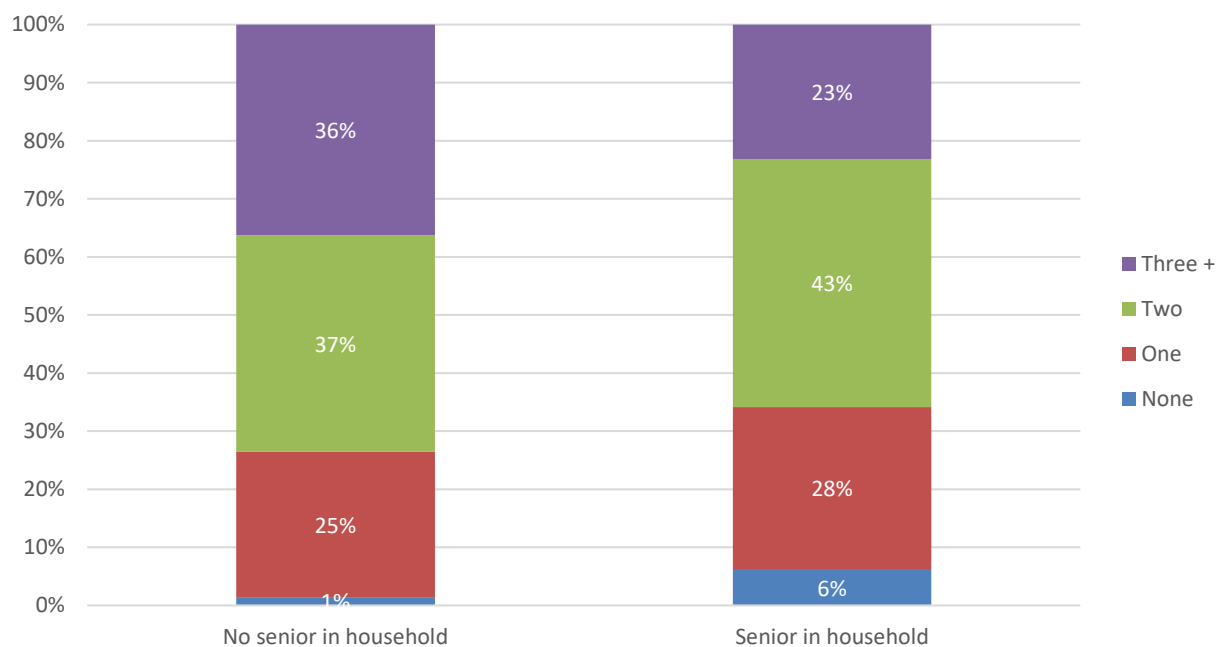
Table 53. Number of computing devices by respondent age

		18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+
Computers	None	17%	9%	16%	18%	15%
	One	40%	37%	31%	27%	48%
	Two	29%	28%	25%	21%	24%
	Three or more	14%	26%	27%	34%	12%
	Total Weighted Count	334	273	266	382	281
Tablets	None	51%	34%	39%	35%	52%
	One	25%	35%	29%	28%	32%
	Two	18%	20%	21%	25%	11%
	Three or more	7%	11%	11%	12%	5%
	Total Weighted Count	334	273	266	382	281
Smartphones	None	0%	2%	2%	2%	8%
	One	33%	27%	24%	16%	34%
	Two	37%	39%	33%	36%	45%
	Three or more	30%	31%	42%	46%	13%
	Total Weighted Count	334	273	266	382	281

Figure 76. Number of computers by respondent age
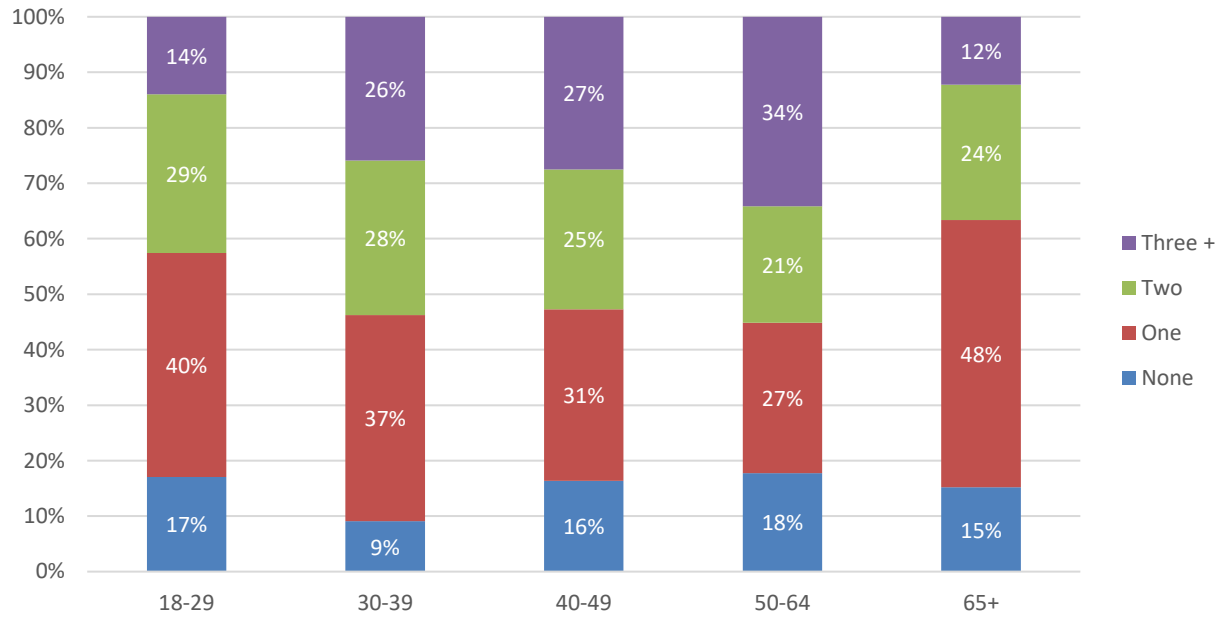
Figure 77. Number of tablets by respondent age
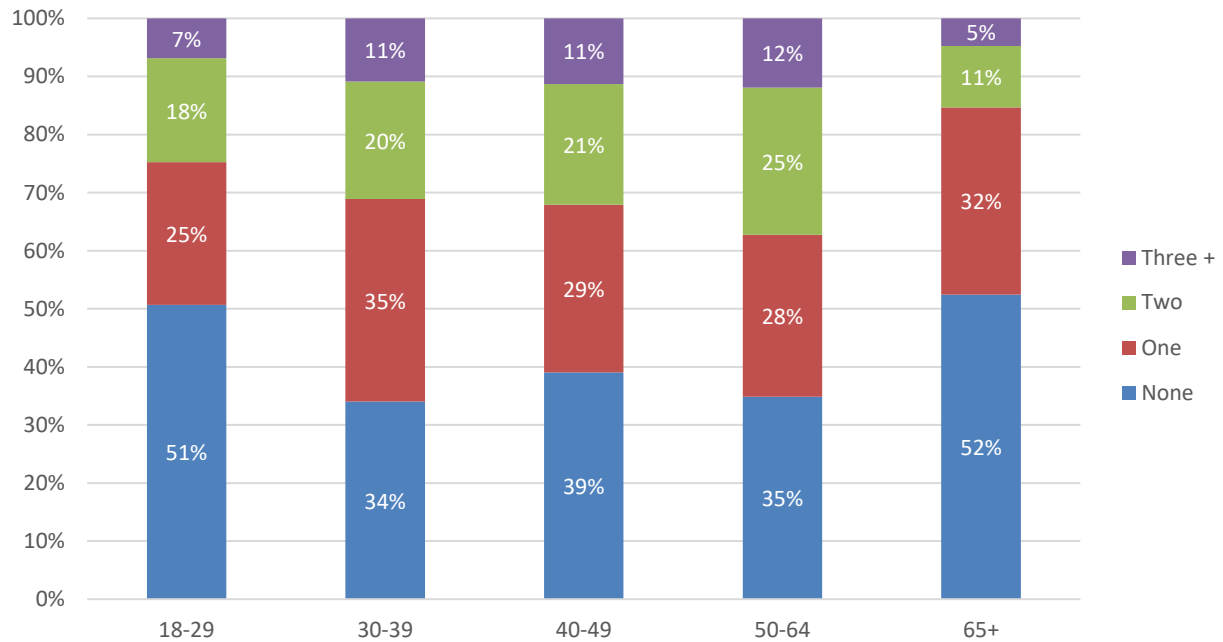
Figure 78. Number of smartphones by respondent age
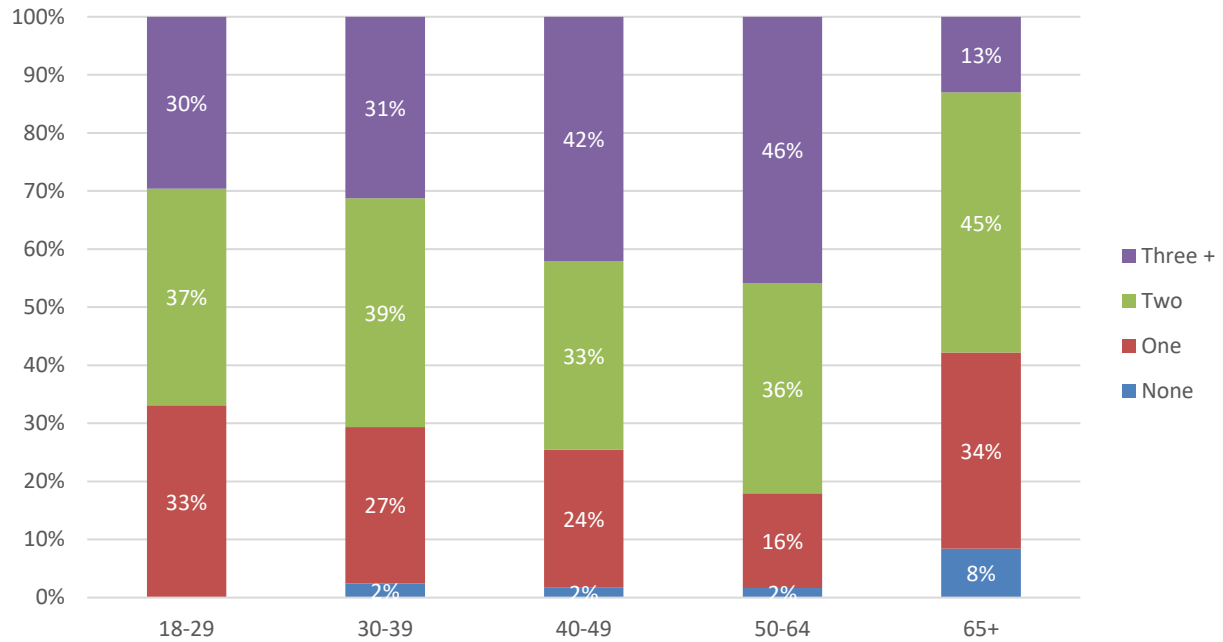
Thinking about the computing device you primarily use, if it were lost or damaged beyond repair, how long do you think it would take you to replace it?

Figure 79. How long it would take to replace a lost or damaged computing device
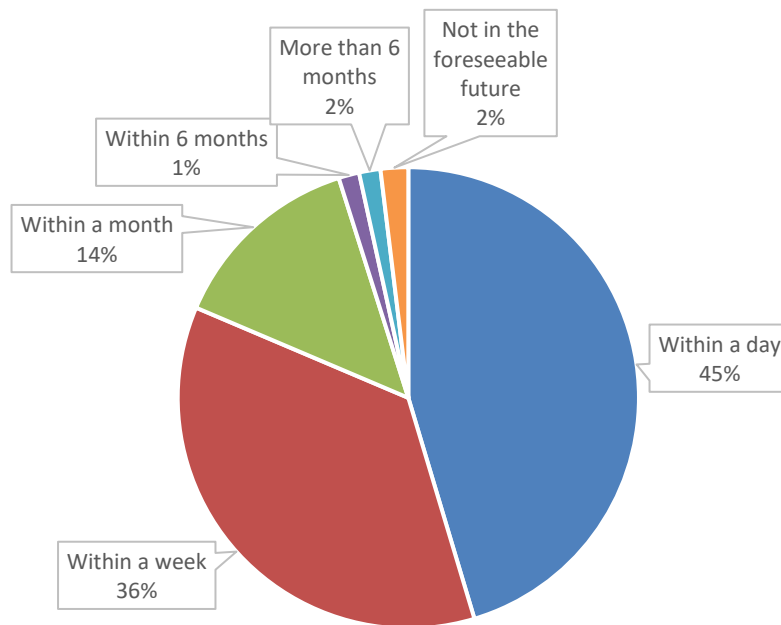
Figure 80. How long it would take to replace a lost or damaged computing device by household size
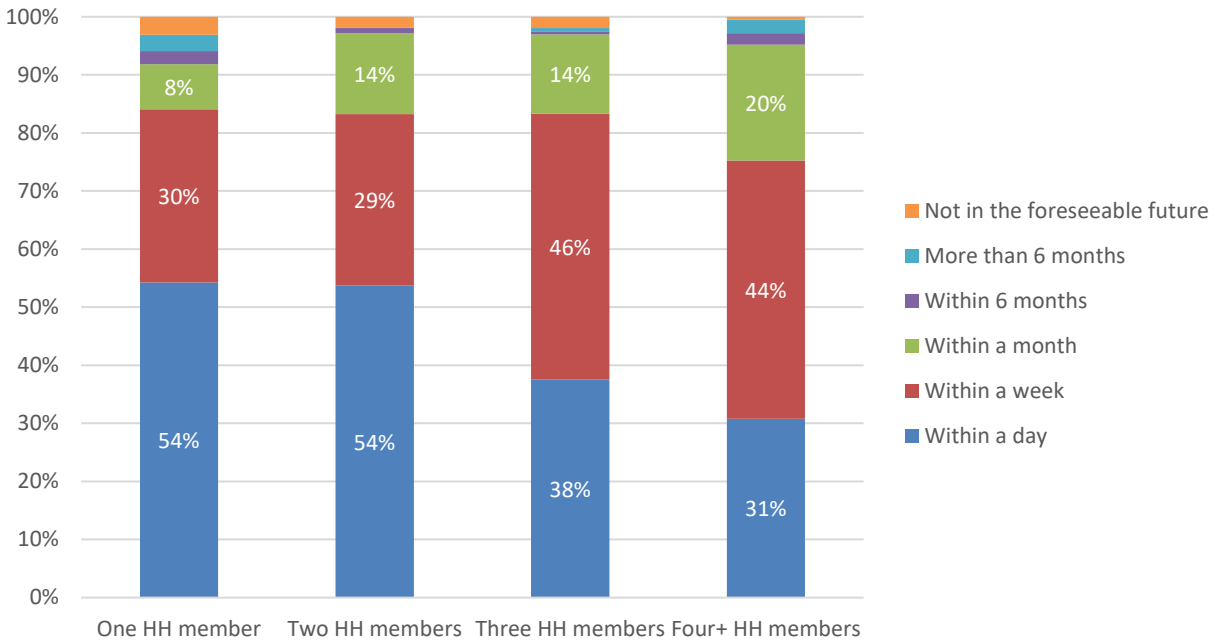
Figure 81. How long it would take to replace a lost or damaged computing device by respondent age
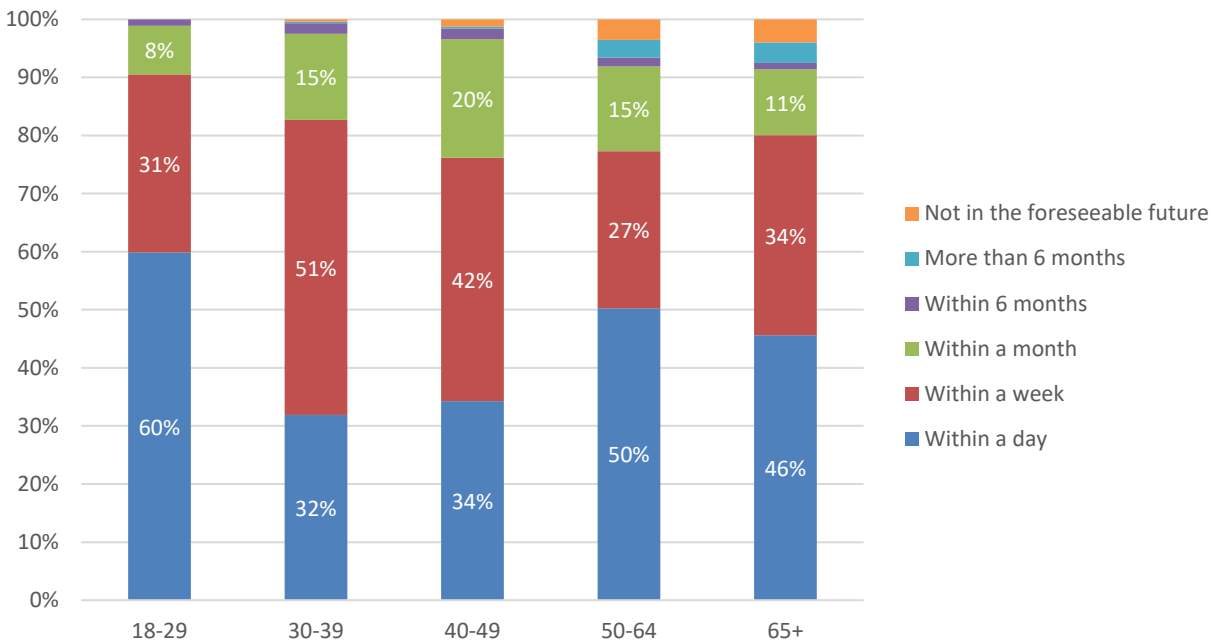
Internet activities questions

Please rate how confident you or the primary user are in doing the following activities on the internet?

Figure 82. Confidence in using the internet for various activities

Activity	Not confident	Slightly confident	Very confident
Shopping, etc. (online consumer services)		3%	95%
Accessing online financial services		5%	93%
Accessing medical services or resources		4%	93%
Sending and receiving emails		6%	92%
Accessing governmental services		7%	91%
Searching for a job online		6%	91%
Using social media		8%	90%
Taking classes or participating in online job training		9%	88%
Participating in online video, voice, or conference calls	5%	8%	87%
Working remotely and telecommuting	4%	10%	86%
Operating a small (home-based) business	12%	22%	66%

Table 54. Confidence in using the internet for various activities by household income

		Less than $50,000	$50,000 to $74,999	$75,000 to $99,999	$100,000 or more
Sending and receiving emails?	Not confident	1%	0%	0%	2%
	Slightly confident	10%	4%	3%	2%
	Very confident	89%	96%	97%	96%
	Total	342	198	157	301
Using social media?	Not confident	2%	1%	1%	4%
	Slightly confident	13%	4%	5%	4%
	Very confident	85%	95%	94%	92%
	Total	309	194	148	286
Participating in online video, voice, or conference calls (such as Zoom, Skype, or FaceTime)?	Not confident	12%	2%	1%	1%
	Slightly confident	4%	10%	18%	5%
	Very confident	84%	89%	80%	94%
	Total	293	180	147	279
Operating a small (home-based) business?	Not confident	16%	19%	10%	5%
	Slightly confident	19%	45%	38%	19%
	Very confident	65%	36%	51%	76%
	Total	152	103	105	196
Working remotely and telecommuting?	Not confident	2%	3%	2%	2%
	Slightly confident	15%	4%	16%	6%
	Very confident	83%	92%	82%	93%
	Total	192	147	132	255
Searching for a job online?	Not confident	2%	2%	1%	4%
	Slightly confident	9%	2%	7%	3%
	Very confident	90%	96%	93%	93%
	Total	207	121	116	204
Taking classes or participating in online job training?	Not confident	2%	2%	1%	3%
	Slightly confident	11%	8%	10%	3%
	Very confident	88%	90%	90%	93%
	Total	204	131	118	241
Accessing medical services or resources?	Not confident	1%	1%	3%	3%
	Slightly confident	2%	1%	5%	4%
	Very confident	97%	99%	92%	93%
	Total	305	186	142	281
Accessing governmental services (such as DMV, benefits enrollment, etc.)?	Not confident	2%	1%	2%	1%
	Slightly confident	7%	4%	4%	8%
	Very confident	91%	95%	94%	91%
	Total	312	193	153	292
Shopping, making travel reservations, or using other online consumer services?	Not confident	3%	1%	2%	0%
	Slightly confident	2%	2%	2%	4%
	Very confident	95%	97%	97%	96%
	Total	326	194	155	297
Accessing online financial services such as banking and paying bills?	Not confident	3%	1%	0%	0%
	Slightly confident	7%	3%	4%	2%
	Very confident	90%	96%	96%	97%
	Total	311	193	155	293

Figure 83. Very confident in using the internet for various activities by household income
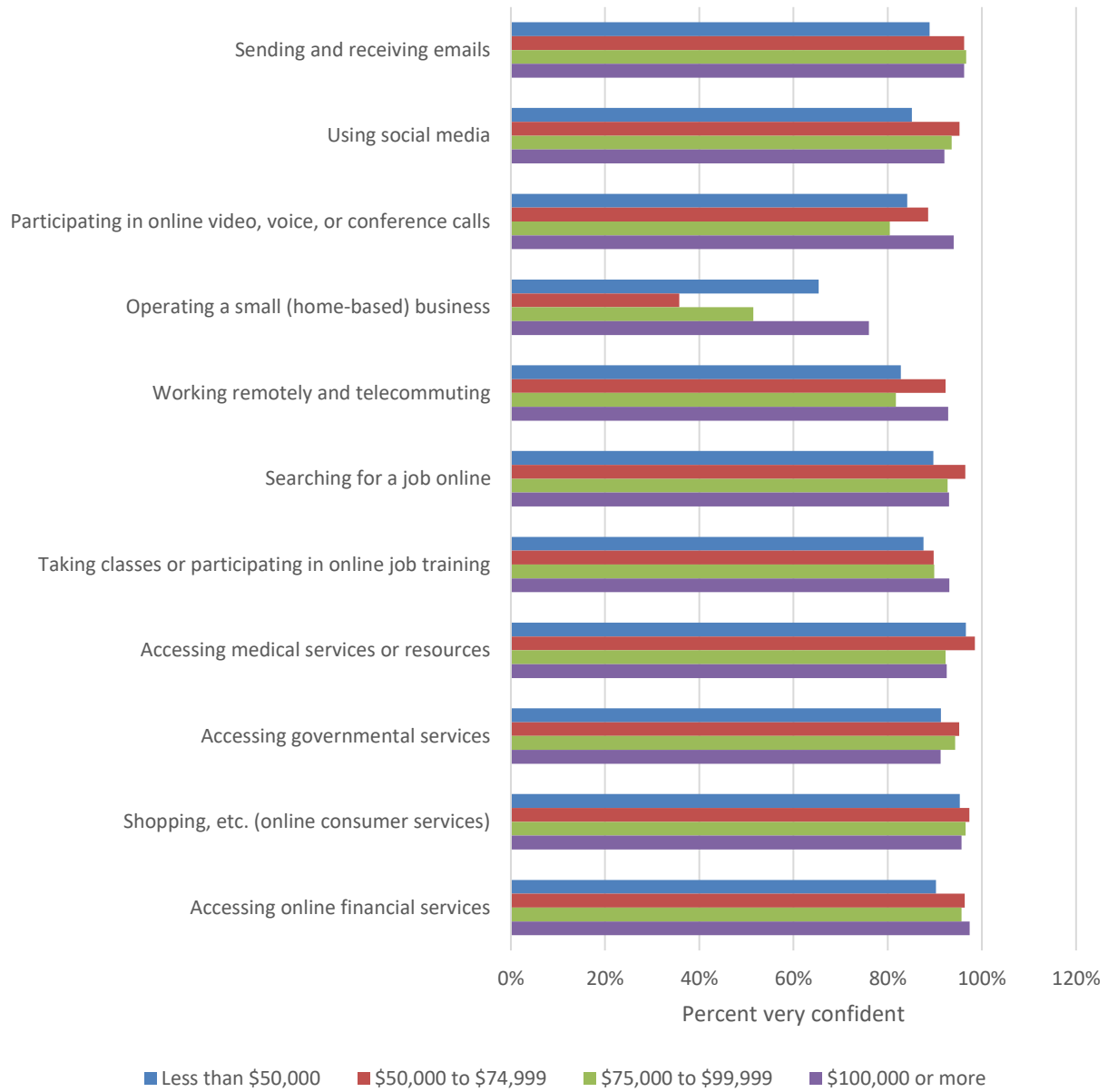
Table 55. Confidence in using the internet for various activities by household size

		One HH member	Two HH members	Three HH members	Four+ HH members
Sending and receiving emails?	Not confident	1%	3%	0%	0%
	Slightly confident	12%	4%	3%	3%
	Very confident	86%	92%	96%	96%
	Total	364	442	266	401
Using social media?	Not confident	3%	4%	2%	1%
	Slightly confident	13%	9%	4%	4%
	Very confident	83%	87%	94%	95%
	Total	337	420	247	389
Participating in online video, voice, or conference calls (such as Zoom, Skype, or FaceTime)?	Not confident	11%	3%	3%	1%
	Slightly confident	9%	8%	10%	6%
	Very confident	80%	88%	87%	92%
	Total	339	373	237	367
Operating a small (home-based) business?	Not confident	20%	9%	9%	8%
	Slightly confident	24%	20%	17%	25%
	Very confident	56%	70%	73%	68%
	Total	224	227	179	211
Working remotely and telecommuting?	Not confident	4%	5%	4%	2%
	Slightly confident	15%	10%	8%	7%
	Very confident	81%	85%	88%	91%
	Total	260	270	205	307
Searching for a job online?	Not confident	3%	5%	2%	1%
	Slightly confident	9%	5%	6%	4%
	Very confident	87%	90%	92%	94%
	Total	289	266	193	278
Taking classes or participating in online job training?	Not confident	4%	5%	2%	1%
	Slightly confident	10%	11%	8%	5%
	Very confident	86%	84%	90%	95%
	Total	291	279	205	287
Accessing medical services or resources?	Not confident	3%	4%	2%	2%
	Slightly confident	3%	5%	2%	4%
	Very confident	94%	91%	96%	94%
	Total	345	407	251	367
Accessing governmental services (such as DMV, benefits enrollment, etc.)?	Not confident	3%	3%	2%	1%
	Slightly confident	8%	9%	4%	4%
	Very confident	89%	88%	94%	96%
	Total	347	412	263	378
Shopping, making travel reservations, or using other online consumer services?	Not confident	3%	2%	0%	2%
	Slightly confident	3%	4%	2%	2%
	Very confident	94%	93%	97%	96%
	Total	348	432	266	391
Accessing online financial services such as banking and paying bills?	Not confident	3%	2%	1%	2%
	Slightly confident	8%	4%	3%	3%
	Very confident	89%	94%	96%	96%
	Total	340	423	264	395

Figure 84. Very confident in using the internet for various activities by household size
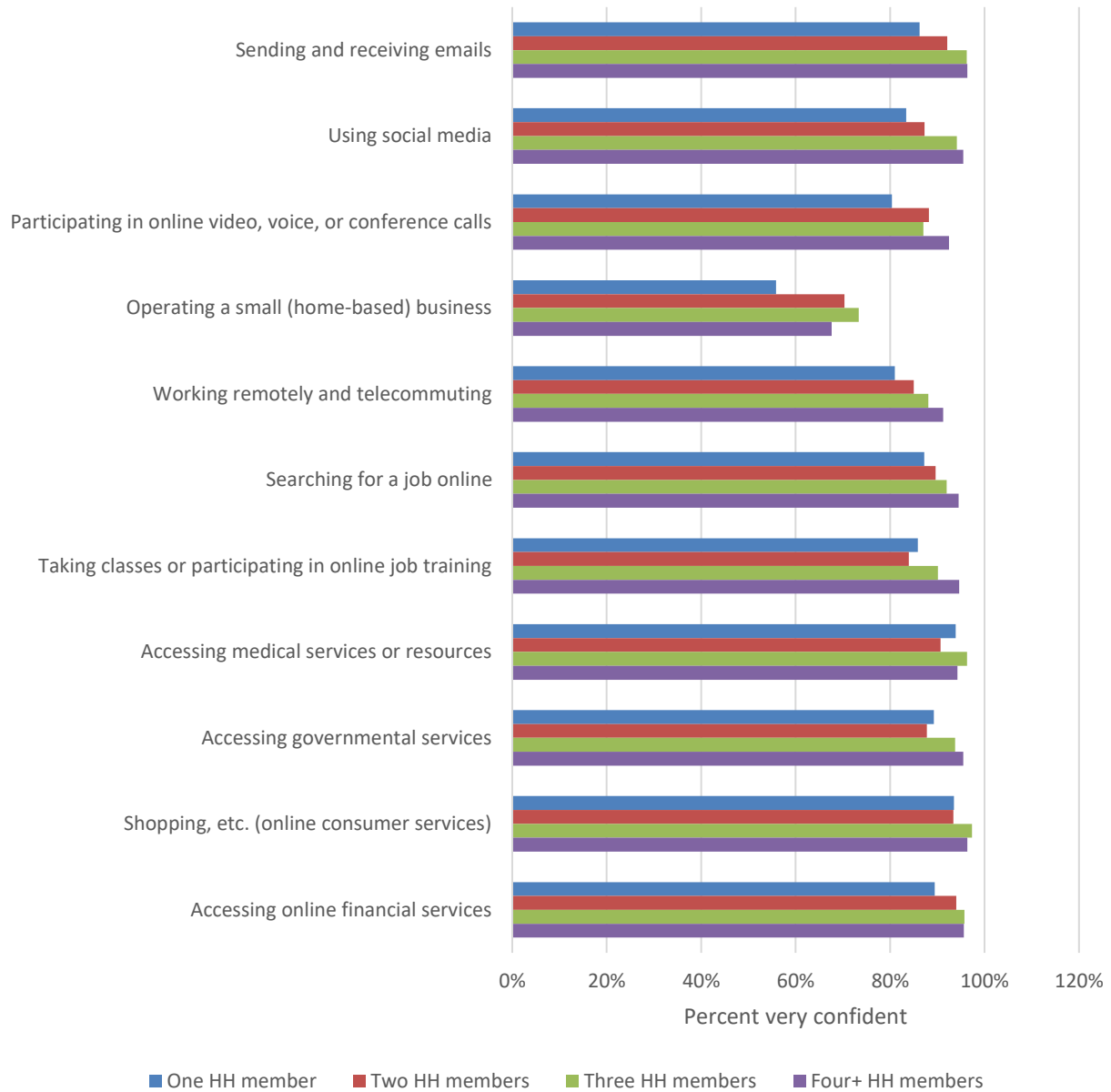
Table 56. Confidence in using the internet for various activities by student in household

		No student household	Student in household
Sending and receiving emails?	Not confident	2%	0%
	Slightly confident	7%	4%
	Very confident	90%	95%
	Total	856	651
Using social media?	Not confident	4%	1%
	Slightly confident	8%	8%
	Very confident	88%	92%
	Total	802	621
Participating in online video, voice, or conference calls (such as Zoom, Skype, or FaceTime)?	Not confident	6%	4%
	Slightly confident	6%	10%
	Very confident	88%	86%
	Total	744	603
Operating a small (home-based) business?	Not confident	10%	14%
	Slightly confident	16%	28%
	Very confident	74%	58%
	Total	439	428
Working remotely and telecommuting?	Not confident	6%	1%
	Slightly confident	9%	11%
	Very confident	85%	87%
	Total	514	555
Searching for a job online?	Not confident	6%	0%
	Slightly confident	5%	8%
	Very confident	90%	92%
	Total	555	497
Taking classes or participating in online job training?	Not confident	5%	1%
	Slightly confident	9%	8%
	Very confident	86%	91%
	Total	564	522
Accessing medical services or resources?	Not confident	4%	1%
	Slightly confident	5%	4%
	Very confident	92%	95%
	Total	787	610
Accessing governmental services (such as DMV, benefits enrollment, etc.)?	Not confident	4%	1%
	Slightly confident	7%	6%
	Very confident	89%	94%
	Total	791	638
Shopping, making travel reservations, or using other online consumer services?	Not confident	3%	1%
	Slightly confident	4%	2%
	Very confident	93%	97%
	Total	821	645
Accessing online financial services such as banking and paying bills?	Not confident	2%	1%
	Slightly confident	5%	5%
	Very confident	93%	94%
	Total	807	643

Figure 85. Very confident in using the internet for various activities by student in household
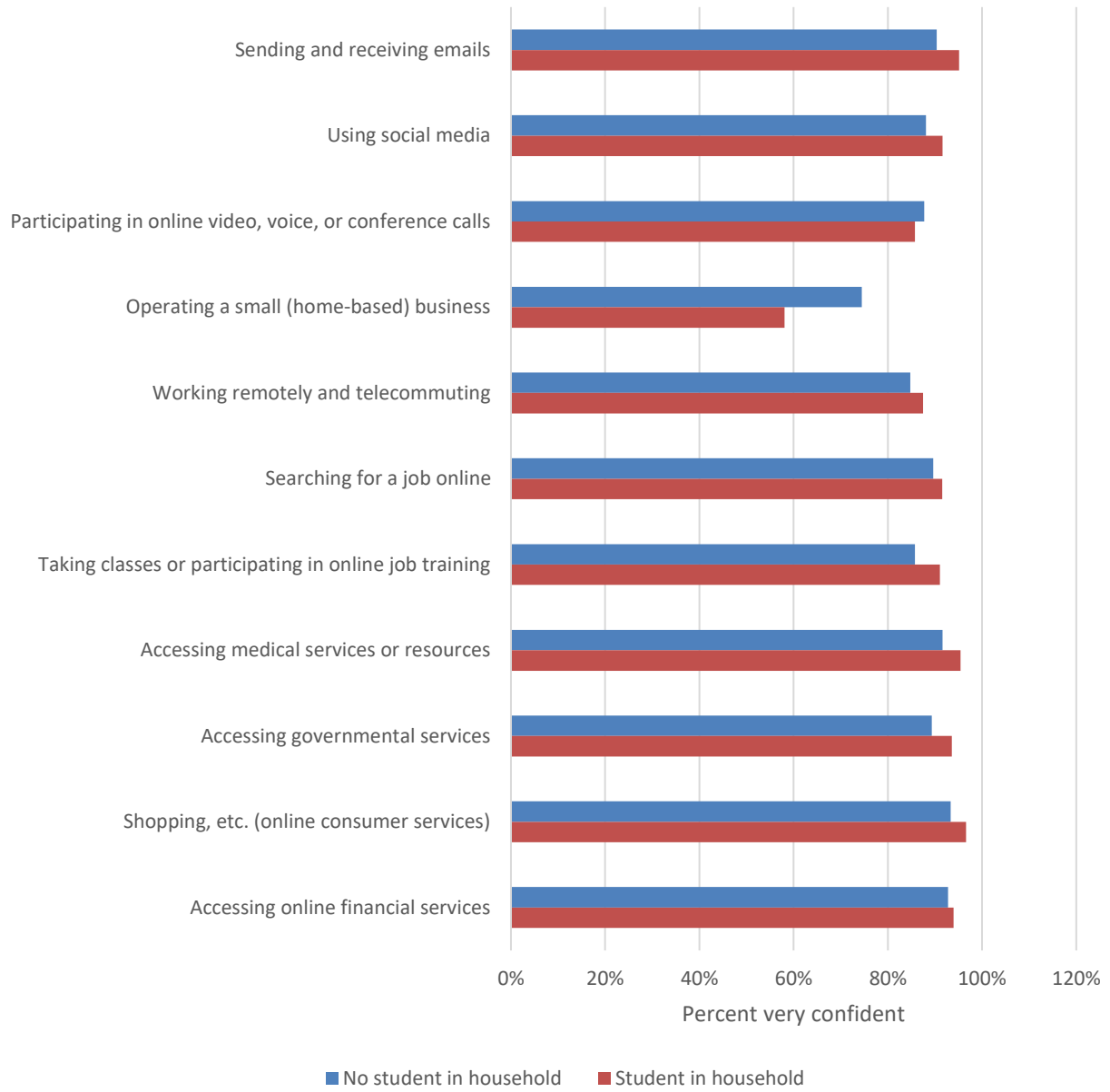
Table 57. Confidence in using the internet for various activities by ages of householders

		No child in household	Child in household	No senior in household	Senior in household
Sending and receiving emails?	Not confident	2%	1%	1%	2%
	Slightly confident	6%	6%	5%	10%
	Very confident	92%	94%	94%	88%
	Total	819	654	1143	330
Using social media?	Not confident	4%	1%	2%	4%
	Slightly confident	8%	7%	7%	10%
	Very confident	88%	92%	91%	85%
	Total	763	631	1109	285
Participating in online video, voice, or conference calls (such as Zoom, Skype, or FaceTime)?	Not confident	5%	5%	3%	10%
	Slightly confident	5%	11%	9%	6%
	Very confident	90%	84%	88%	85%
	Total	708	609	1055	262
Operating a small (home-based) business?	Not confident	10%	13%	12%	10%
	Slightly confident	13%	30%	25%	6%
	Very confident	77%	56%	63%	84%
	Total	412	430	713	129
Working remotely and telecommuting?	Not confident	5%	2%	3%	8%
	Slightly confident	9%	11%	11%	6%
	Very confident	86%	87%	86%	86%
	Total	516	526	898	144
Searching for a job online?	Not confident	5%	1%	3%	6%
	Slightly confident	5%	7%	6%	7%
	Very confident	90%	92%	91%	87%
	Total	527	499	881	146
Taking classes or participating in online job training?	Not confident	5%	1%	2%	8%
	Slightly confident	9%	8%	8%	10%
	Very confident	86%	91%	90%	82%
	Total	551	511	920	142
Accessing medical services or resources?	Not confident	4%	1%	2%	4%
	Slightly confident	5%	3%	4%	5%
	Very confident	92%	96%	94%	92%
	Total	761	609	1057	313
Accessing governmental services (such as DMV, benefits enrollment, etc.)?	Not confident	3%	1%	1%	5%
	Slightly confident	8%	5%	6%	8%
	Very confident	89%	94%	93%	87%
	Total	764	637	1089	311
Shopping, making travel reservations, or using other online consumer services?	Not confident	2%	1%	1%	5%
	Slightly confident	4%	2%	3%	3%
	Very confident	94%	96%	96%	92%
	Total	792	645	1123	315
Accessing online financial services such as banking and paying bills?	Not confident	2%	1%	1%	5%
	Slightly confident	4%	4%	4%	5%
	Very confident	93%	94%	95%	91%
	Total	772	650	1121	300

Figure 86. Very confident in using the internet for various activities by children in household (at least one household member under age 18)

Percent very confident

■ No child in household   ■ Child in household
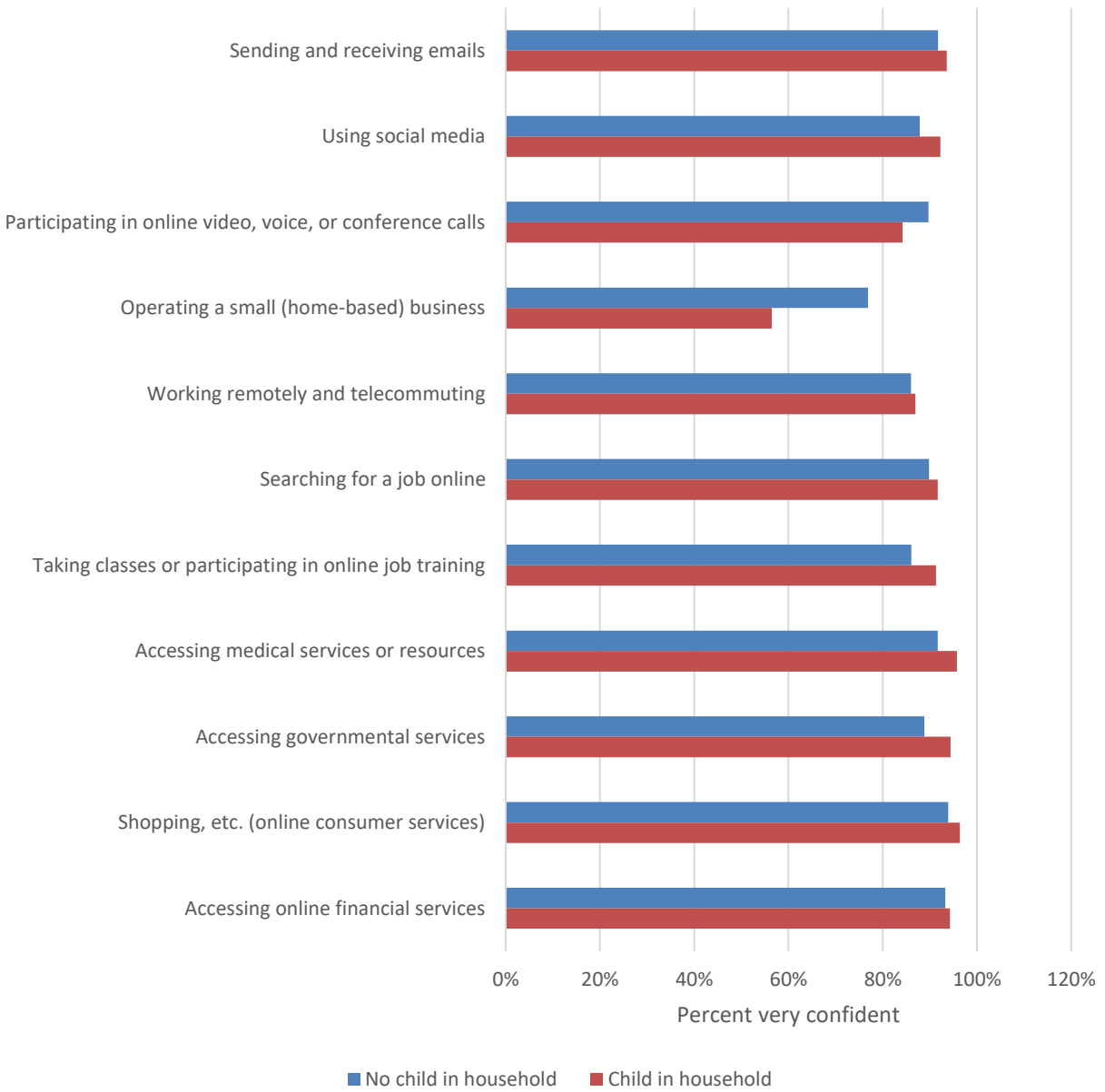
Figure 87. Very confident in using the internet for various activities by seniors in household (at least one household member age 65 or older)

Percent very confident

- Sending and receiving emails: 94% (No senior), 88% (Senior)
- Using social media: 91% (No senior), 85% (Senior)
- Participating in online video, voice, or conference calls: 88% (No senior), 85% (Senior)
- Operating a small (home-based) business: 63% (No senior), 84% (Senior)
- Working remotely and telecommuting: 86% (No senior), 86% (Senior)
- Searching for a job online: 91% (No senior), 87% (Senior)
- Taking classes or participating in online job training: 90% (No senior), 82% (Senior)
- Accessing medical services or resources: 94% (No senior), 92% (Senior)
- Accessing governmental services: 93% (No senior), 87% (Senior)
- Shopping, etc. (online consumer services): 96% (No senior), 92% (Senior)
- Accessing online financial services: 95% (No senior), 91% (Senior)

■ No senior in household ■ Senior in household

Table 58. Confidence in using the internet for various activities by respondent age

		18-29	30-39	40-49	60-64	65+
Sending and receiving emails?	Not confident	3%	1%	0%	2%	2%
	Slightly confident	7%	4%	3%	6%	11%
	Very confident	91%	96%	97%	92%	87%
	Total	334	264	264	372	265
Using social media?	Not confident	3%	1%	1%	5%	5%
	Slightly confident	8%	4%	5%	9%	12%
	Very confident	90%	95%	94%	86%	82%
	Total	334	263	259	335	225
Participating in online video, voice, or conference calls (such as Zoom, Skype, or FaceTime)?	Not confident	7%	2%	1%	4%	12%
	Slightly confident	10%	7%	7%	9%	7%
	Very confident	83%	91%	93%	87%	80%
	Total	318	246	250	320	206
Operating a small (home-based) business?	Not confident	20%	9%	4%	8%	14%
	Slightly confident	21%	34%	21%	20%	10%
	Very confident	59%	57%	75%	72%	76%
	Total	259	155	152	202	93
Working remotely and telecommuting?	Not confident	1%	3%	1%	6%	11%
	Slightly confident	16%	7%	6%	10%	9%
	Very confident	83%	90%	92%	84%	80%
	Total	281	211	218	253	97
Searching for a job online?	Not confident	3%	1%	1%	5%	8%
	Slightly confident	9%	5%	2%	7%	8%
	Very confident	88%	94%	97%	88%	83%
	Total	294	200	202	250	100
Taking classes or participating in online job training?	Not confident	3%	1%	1%	4%	10%
	Slightly confident	10%	6%	4%	10%	15%
	Very confident	87%	93%	95%	86%	75%
	Total	299	214	214	253	100
Accessing medical services or resources?	Not confident	4%	0%	1%	3%	5%
	Slightly confident	3%	4%	2%	6%	6%
	Very confident	94%	95%	97%	91%	90%
	Total	327	243	251	323	248
Accessing governmental services (such as DMV, benefits enrollment, etc.)?	Not confident	2%	0%	0%	3%	5%
	Slightly confident	7%	6%	2%	8%	10%
	Very confident	91%	94%	98%	89%	85%
	Total	330	258	256	331	250
Shopping, making travel reservations, or using other online consumer services?	Not confident	1%	0%	0%	4%	5%
	Slightly confident	3%	3%	1%	6%	3%
	Very confident	96%	97%	98%	91%	92%
	Total	331	262	262	353	252
Accessing online financial services such as banking and paying bills?	Not confident	1%	0%	1%	4%	4%
	Slightly confident	8%	2%	2%	6%	6%
	Very confident	91%	98%	98%	90%	91%
	Total	334	259	258	353	240

Figure 88. Very confident in using the internet for various activities by respondent age
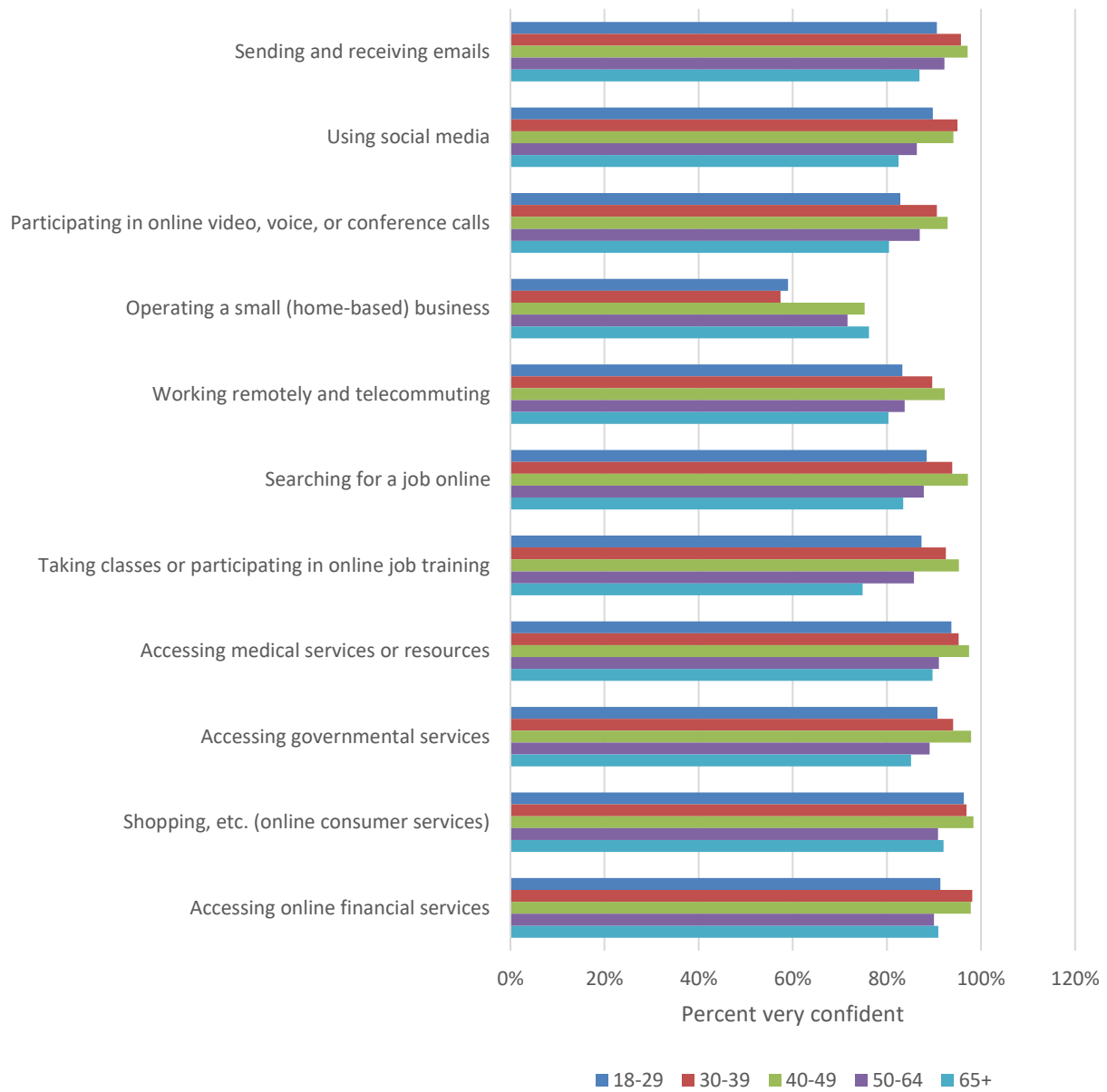
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your internet and computer skills?

Figure 89. Agreement with statements about internet skills

Legend: ■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neutral ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

Values shown:
- I can use and adjust privacy settings on social media: 6%, 4%, 10%, 47%, 33%
- I can identify false or misleading information: 3%, 3%, 11%, 50%, 33%
- I can recognize and avoid online fraud (or phishing schemes): 2%, 2%, 13%, 48%, 35%
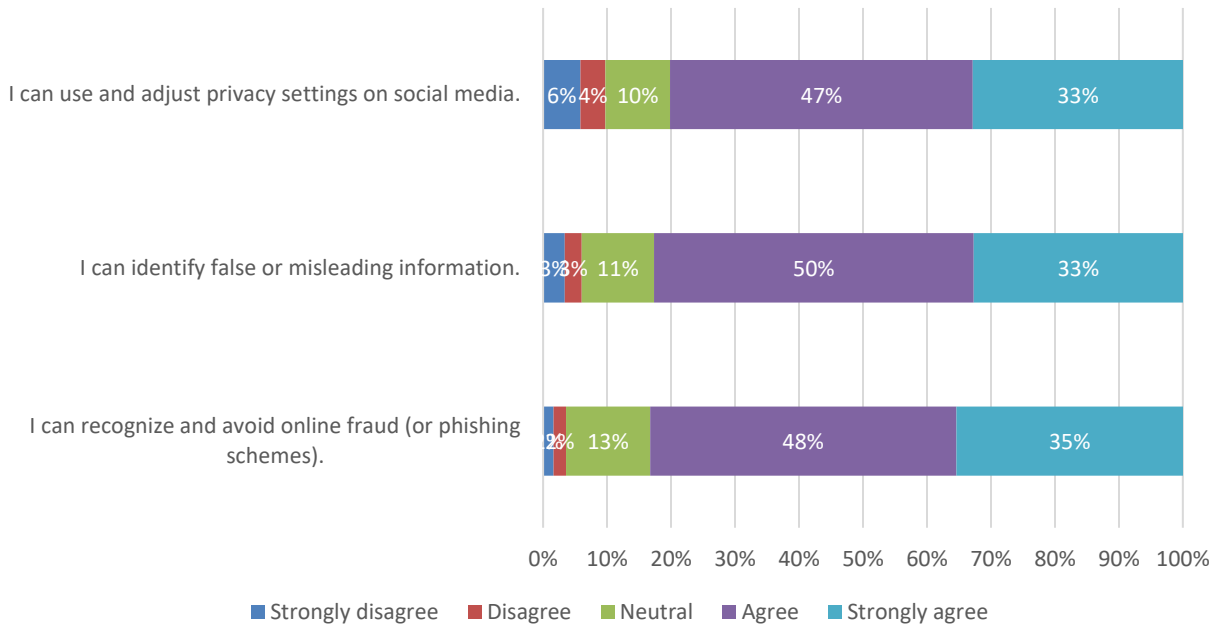
Figure 90. I can use and adjust privacy settings on social media by household income

Legend: ■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Values shown:
- Less than $50,000: 11%, 6%, 11%, 45%, 26%
- $50,000 to $74,999: 2%, 2%, 7%, 35%, 54%
- $75,000 to $99,999: 4%, 2%, 8%, 55%, 32%
- $100,000 or more: 3%, 2%, 9%, 34%, 52%
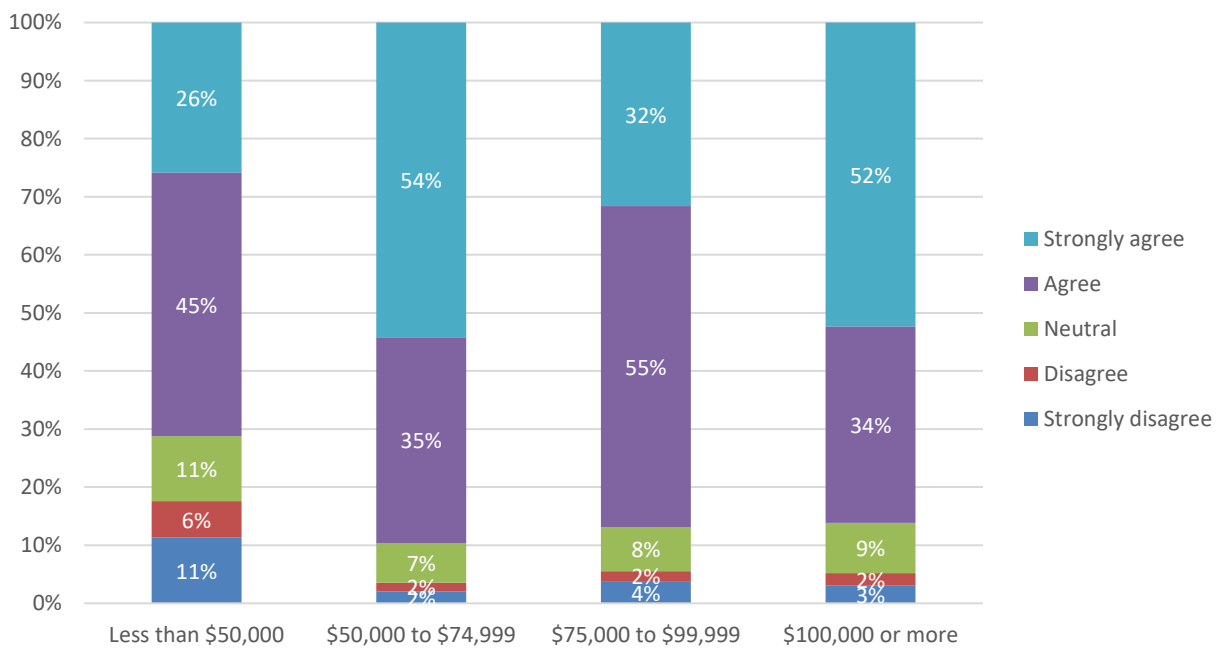
Figure 91. I can identify false or misleading information by household income
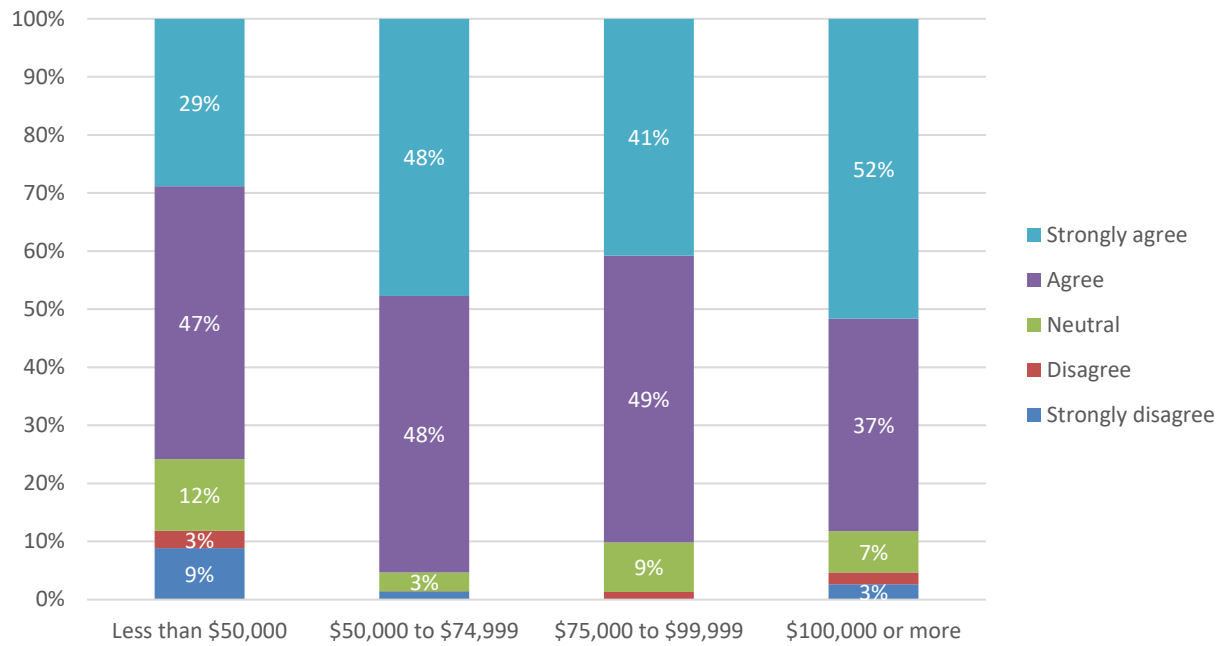
Figure 92. I can recognize and avoid online fraud by household income
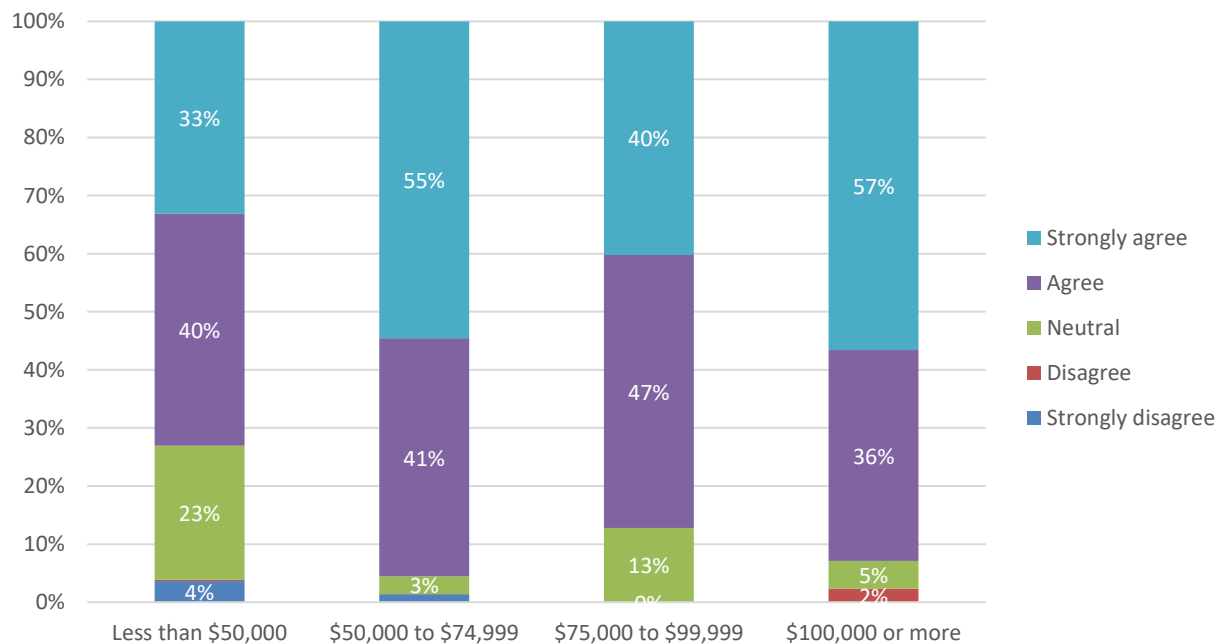
Figure 93. I can use and adjust privacy settings on social media by race/ethnicity
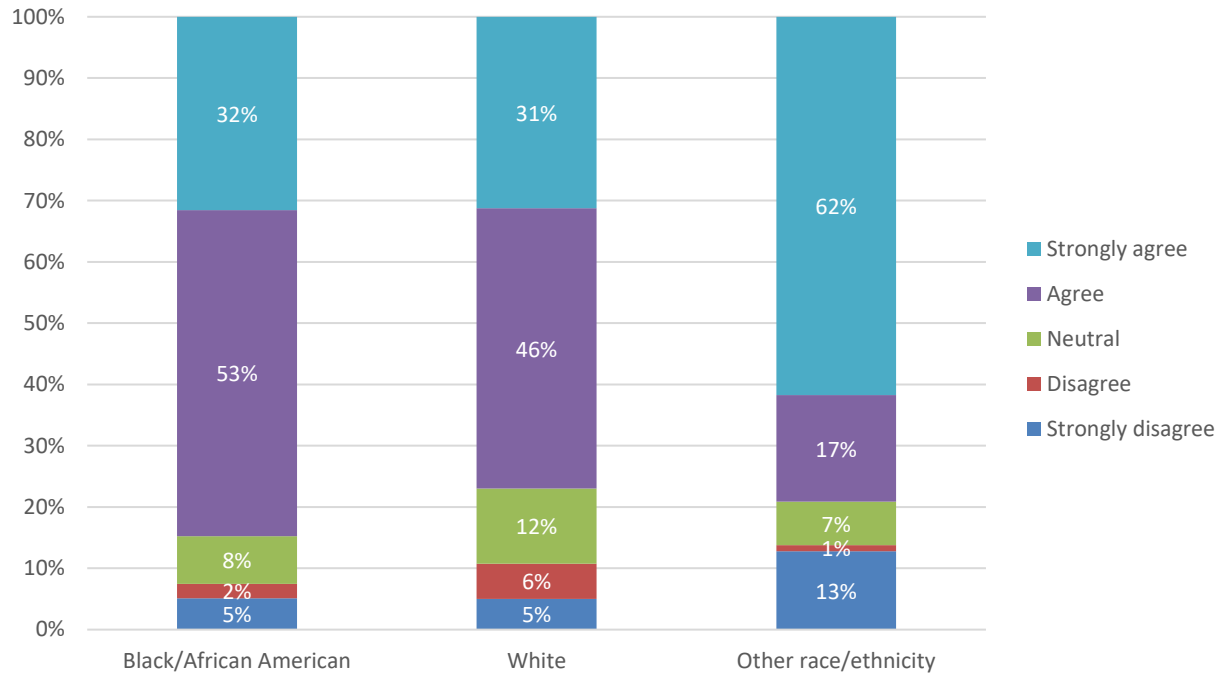
Figure 94. I can identify false or misleading information by race/ethnicity
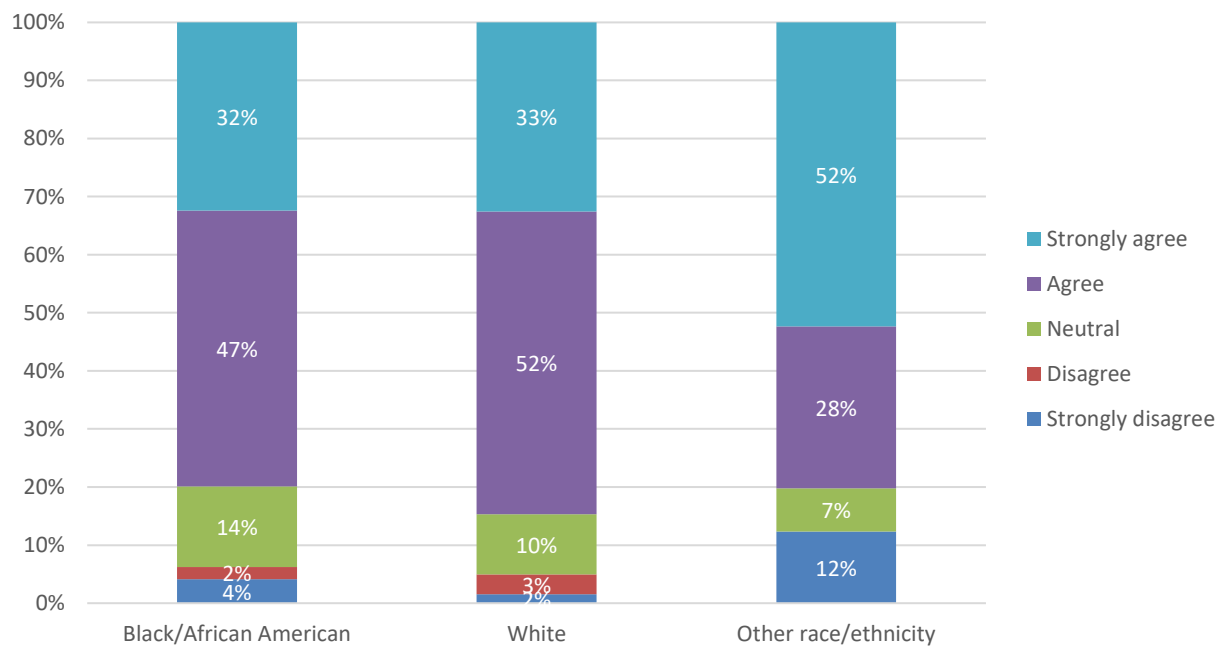
Figure 95. I can recognize and avoid online fraud by race/ethnicity
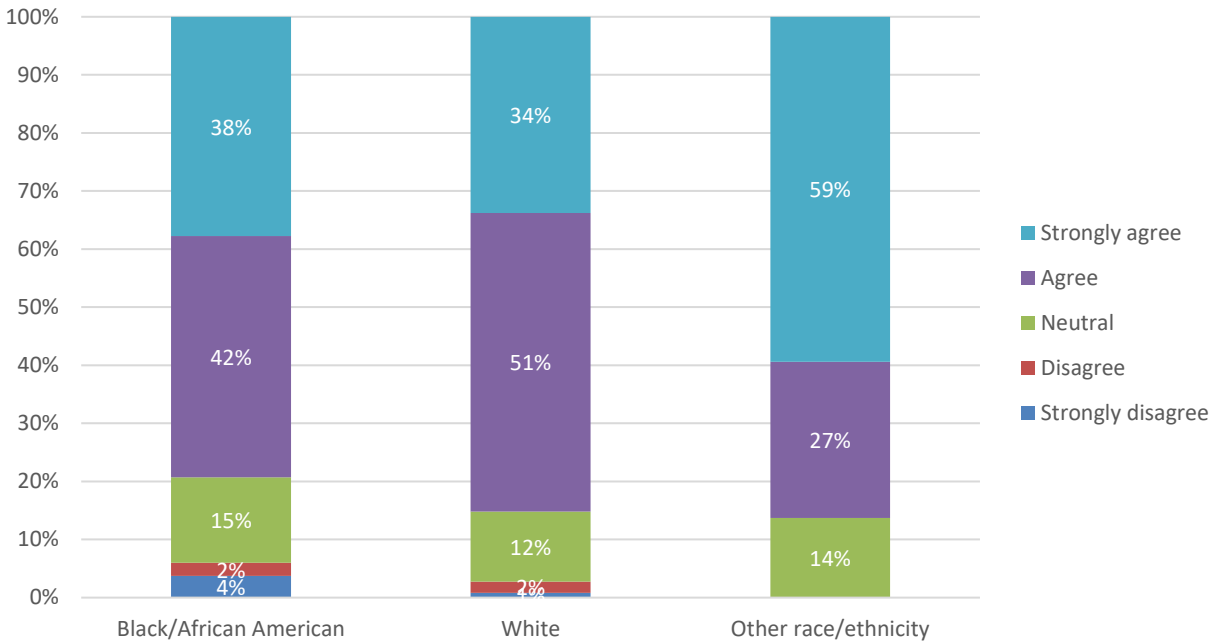
Figure 96. I can use and adjust privacy settings on social media by student in household
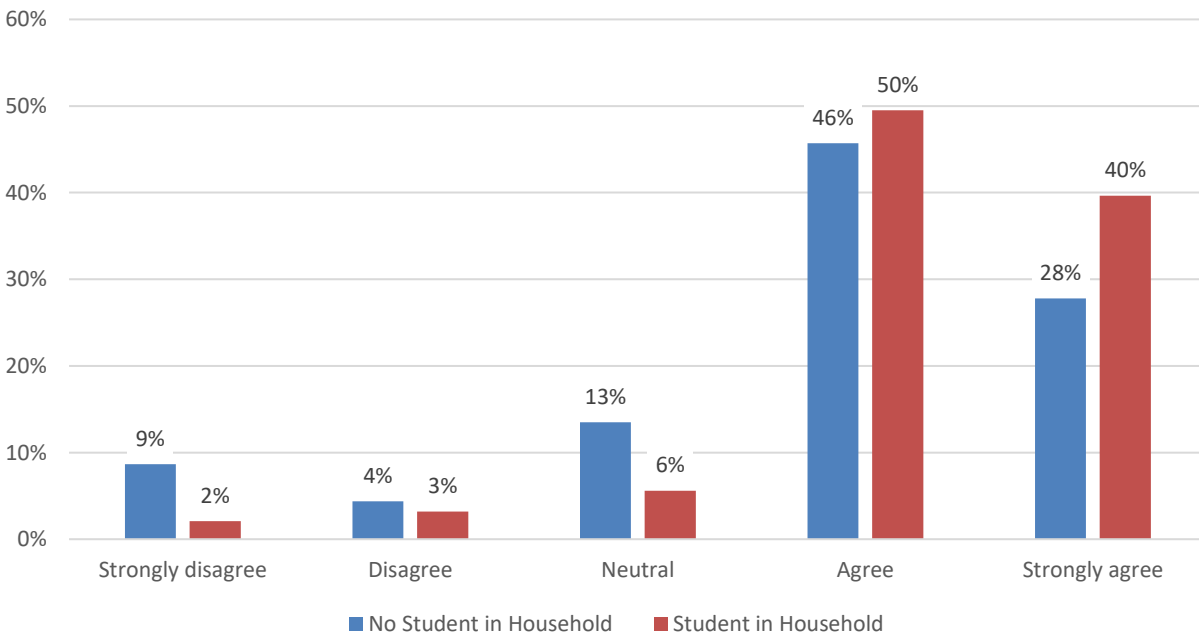
Figure 97. I can identify false or misleading information by student in household
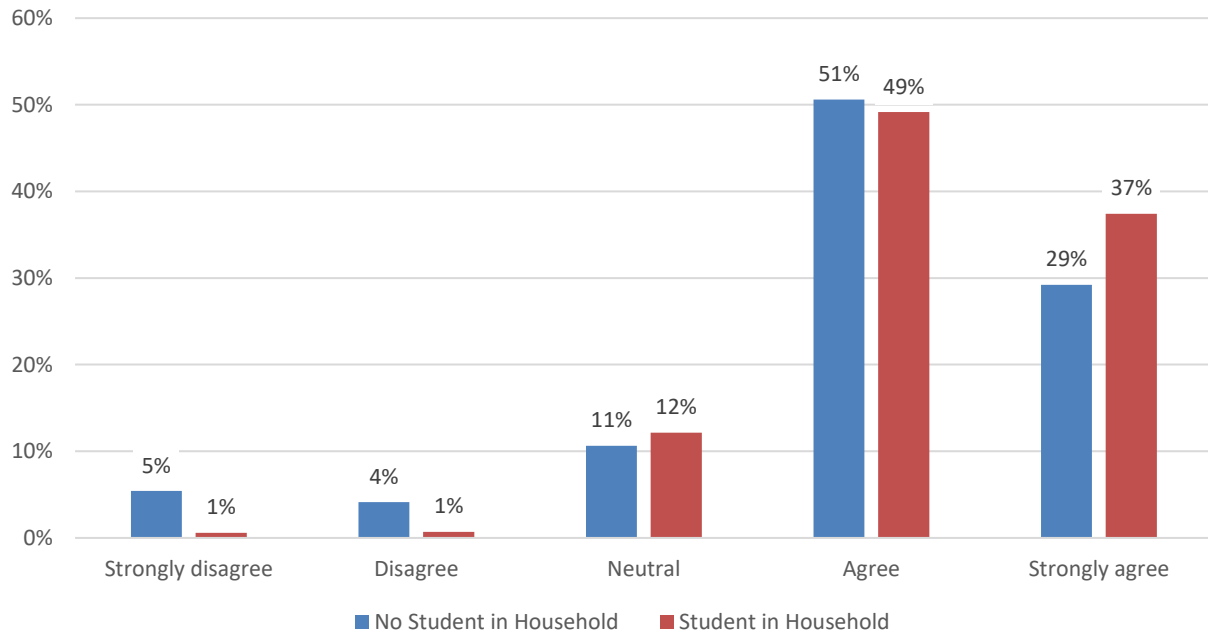
Figure 98. I can recognize and avoid online fraud by student in household
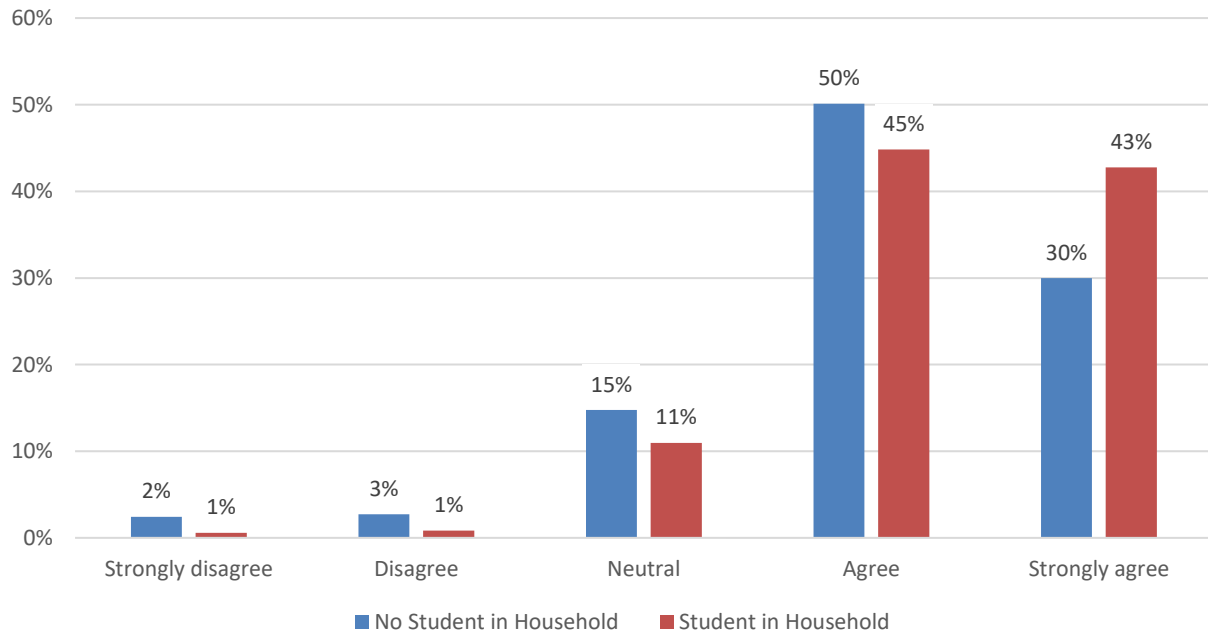
Figure 99. I can use and adjust privacy settings on social media by household size
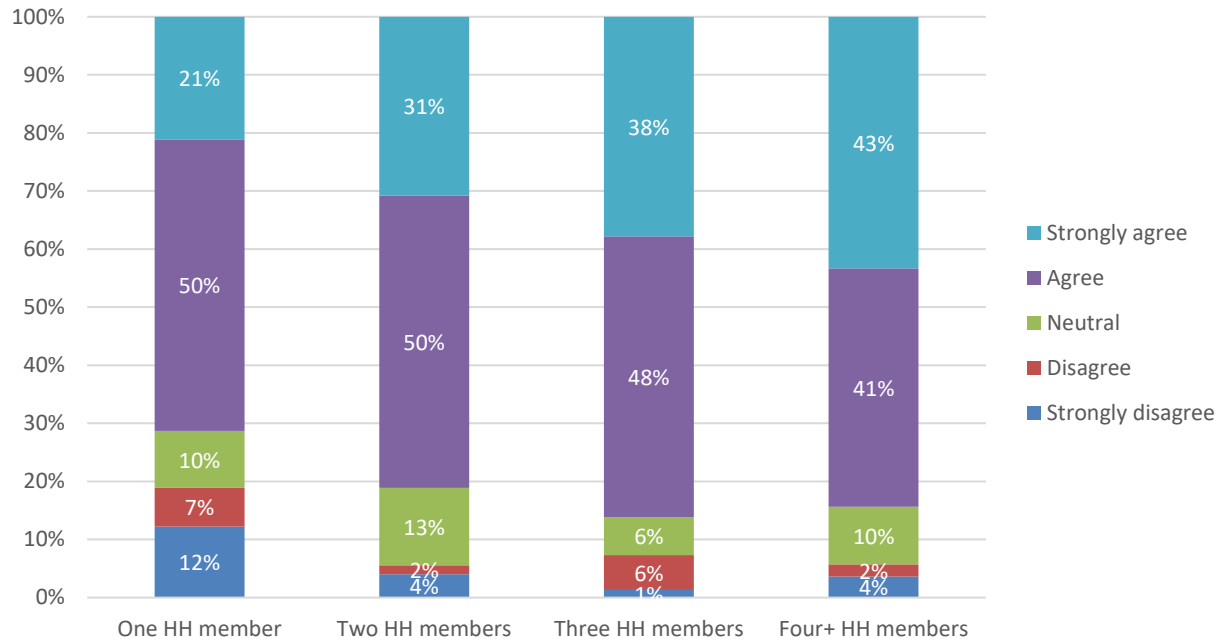
Figure 100. I can identify false or misleading information by household size
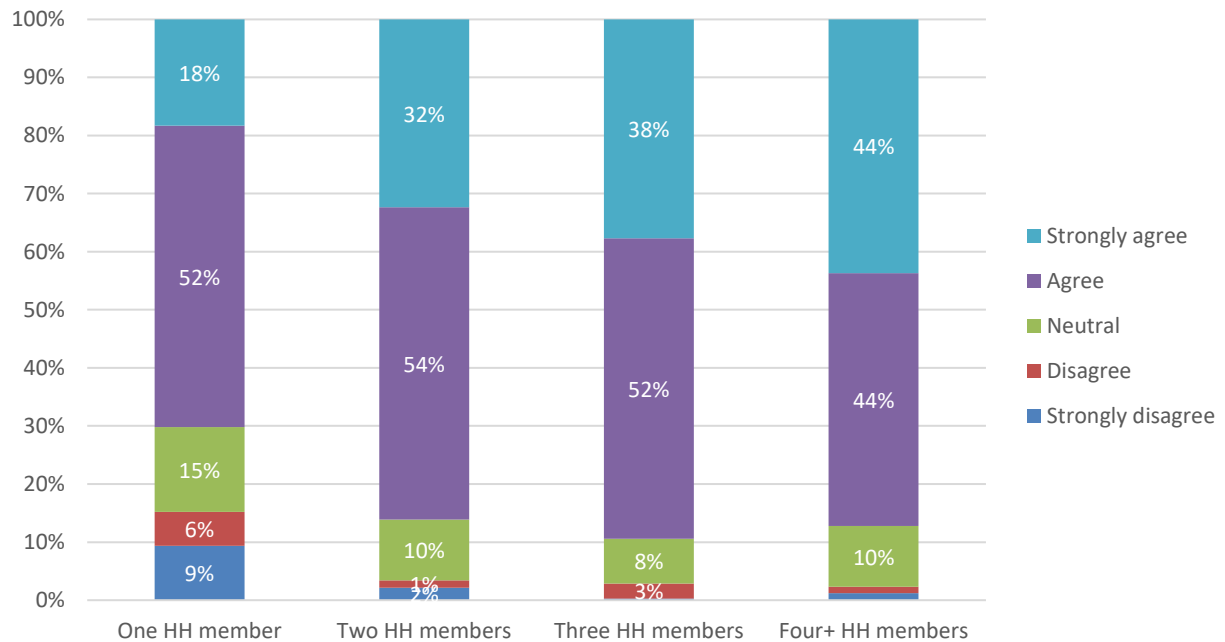
Figure 101. I can recognize and avoid online fraud by household size
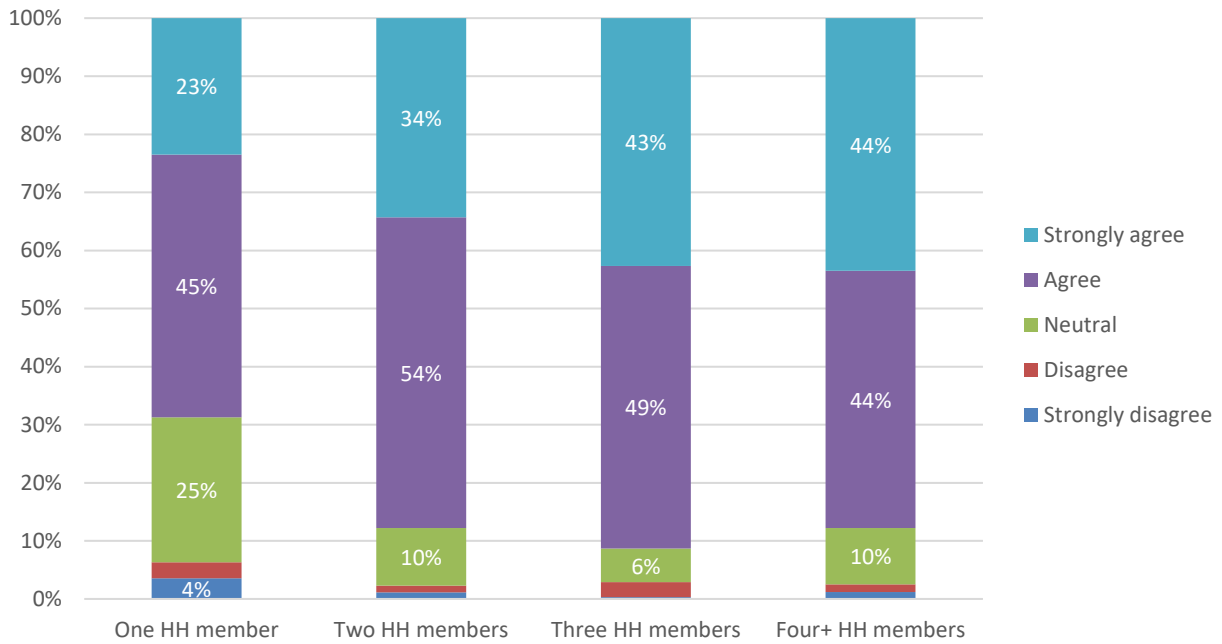
Figure 102. I can use and adjust privacy settings on social media by children in household (at least one household member under age 18)
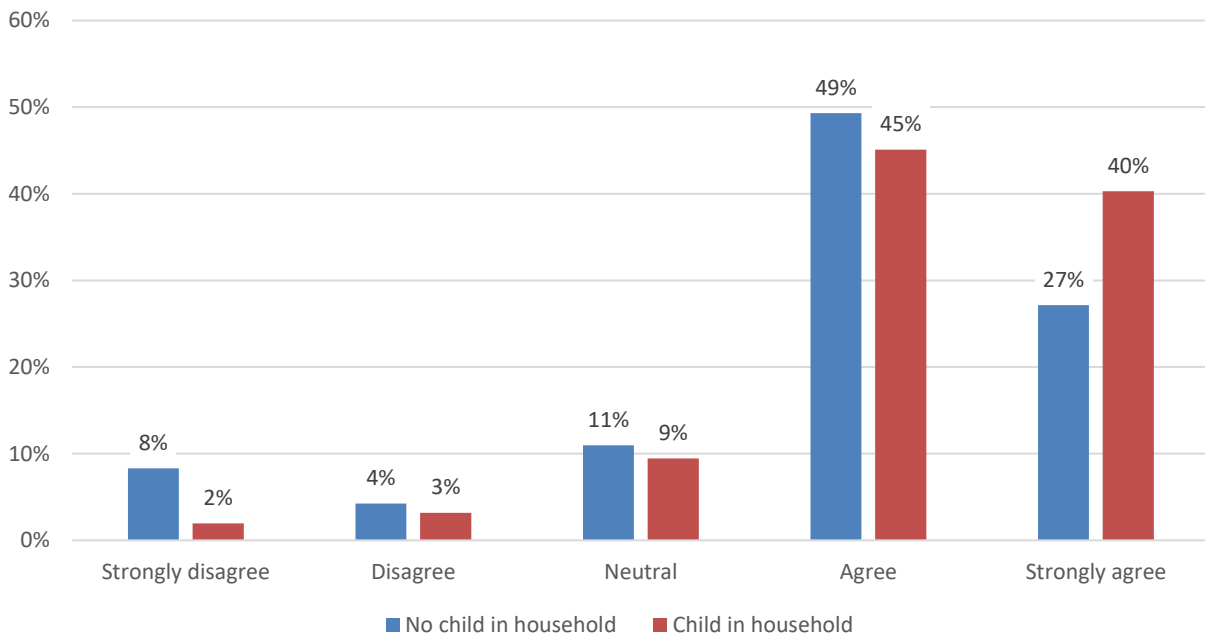
Figure 103. I can identify false or misleading information by children in household (at least one household member under age 18)
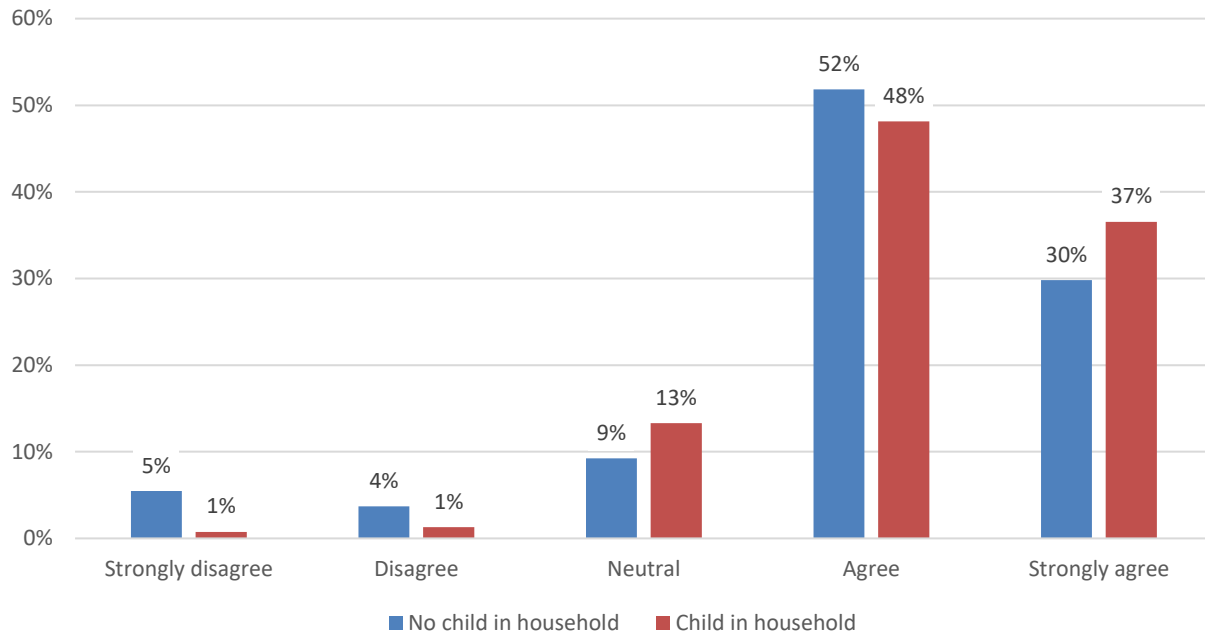
Figure 104. I can recognize and avoid online fraud by children in household (at least one household member under age 18)
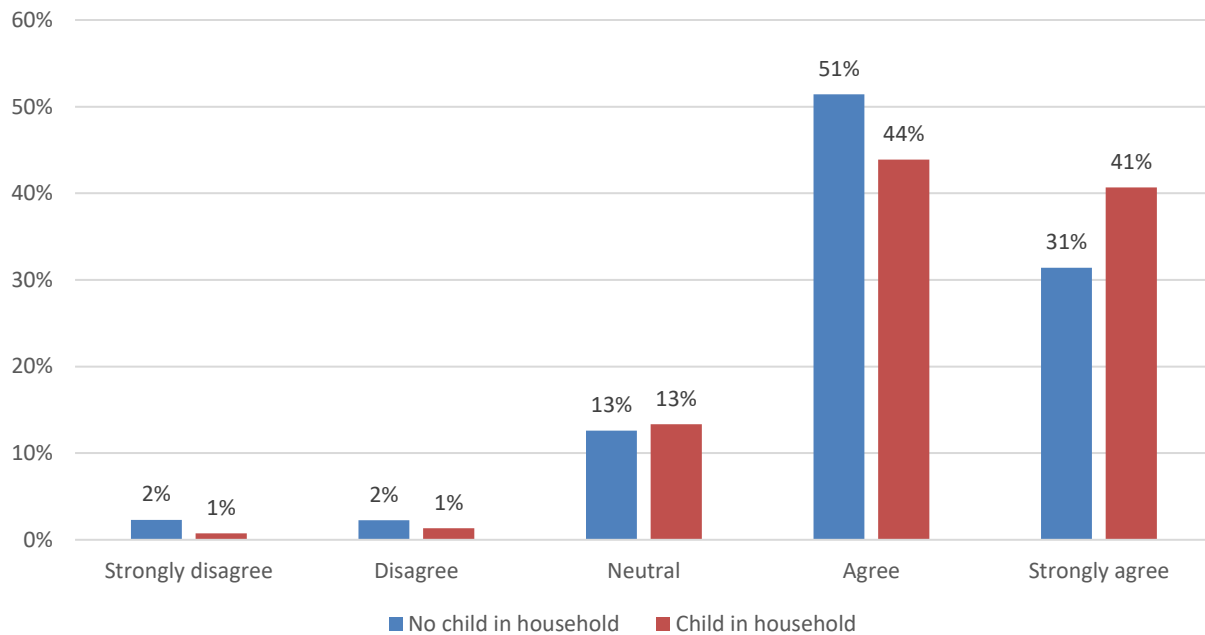
Figure 105. I can use and adjust privacy settings on social media by seniors in household (at least one household member age 65 or older)
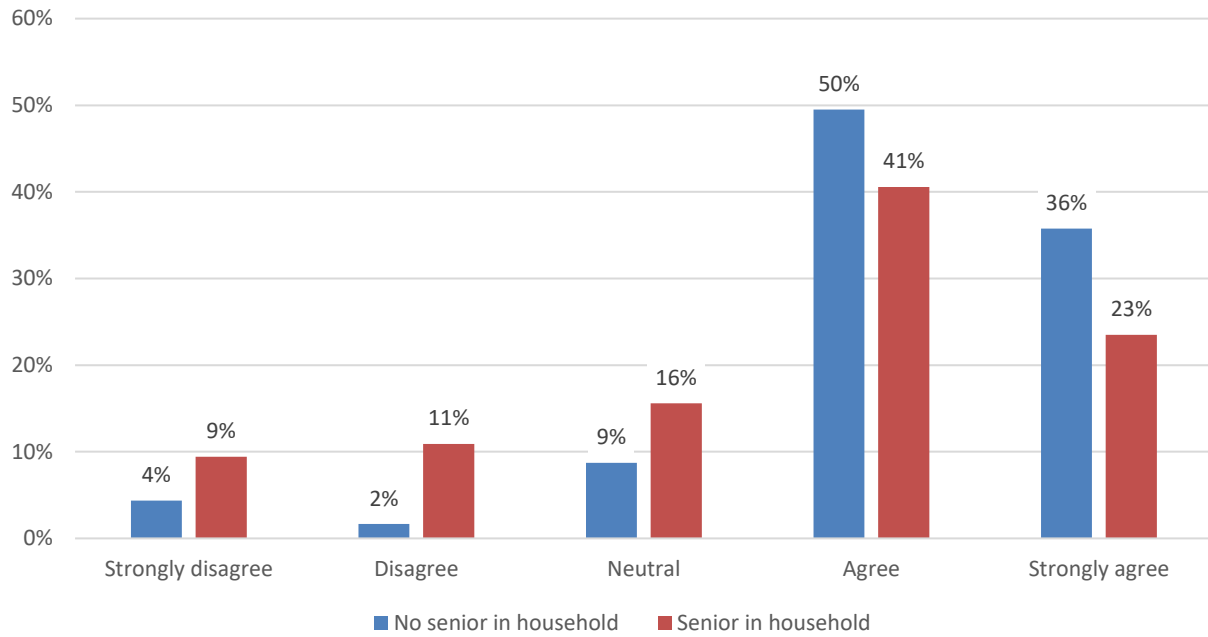
Figure 106. I can identify false or misleading information by seniors in household (at least one household member age 65 or older)
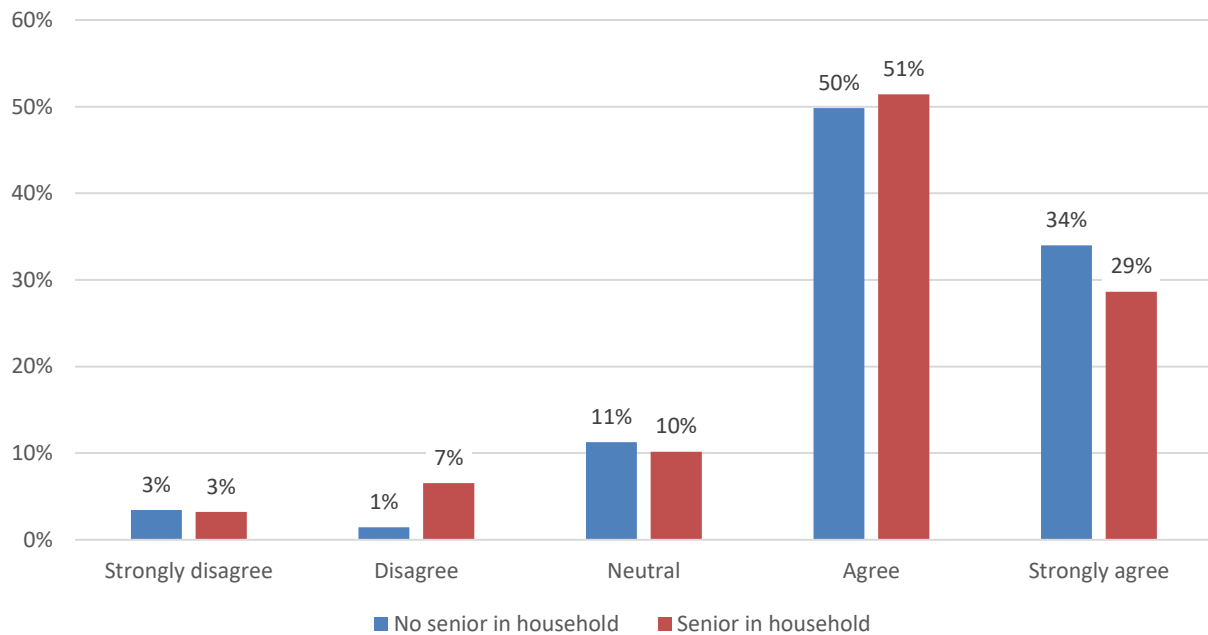
Figure 107. I can recognize and avoid online fraud by seniors in household (at least one household member age 65 or older)

Legend: ■ No senior in household ■ Senior in household

Category	No senior in household	Senior in household
Strongly disagree	1%	3%
Disagree	1%	3%
Neutral	13%	14%
Agree	47%	52%
Strongly agree	38%	29%
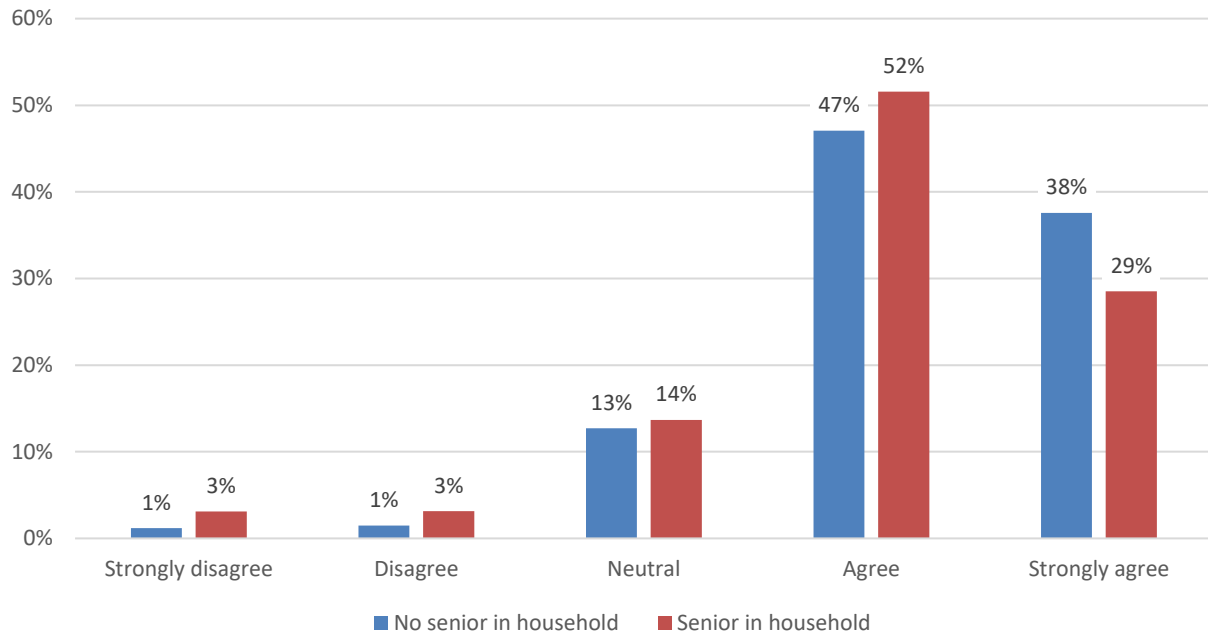
Figure 108. I can use and adjust privacy settings on social media by respondent age

Legend: ■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-64	65+
Strongly agree	44%	38%	31%	29%	22%
Agree	51%	52%	53%	45%	38%
Neutral	3%	10%	7%	14%	17%
Disagree			1%	3%	13%
Strongly disagree			9%	9%	10%
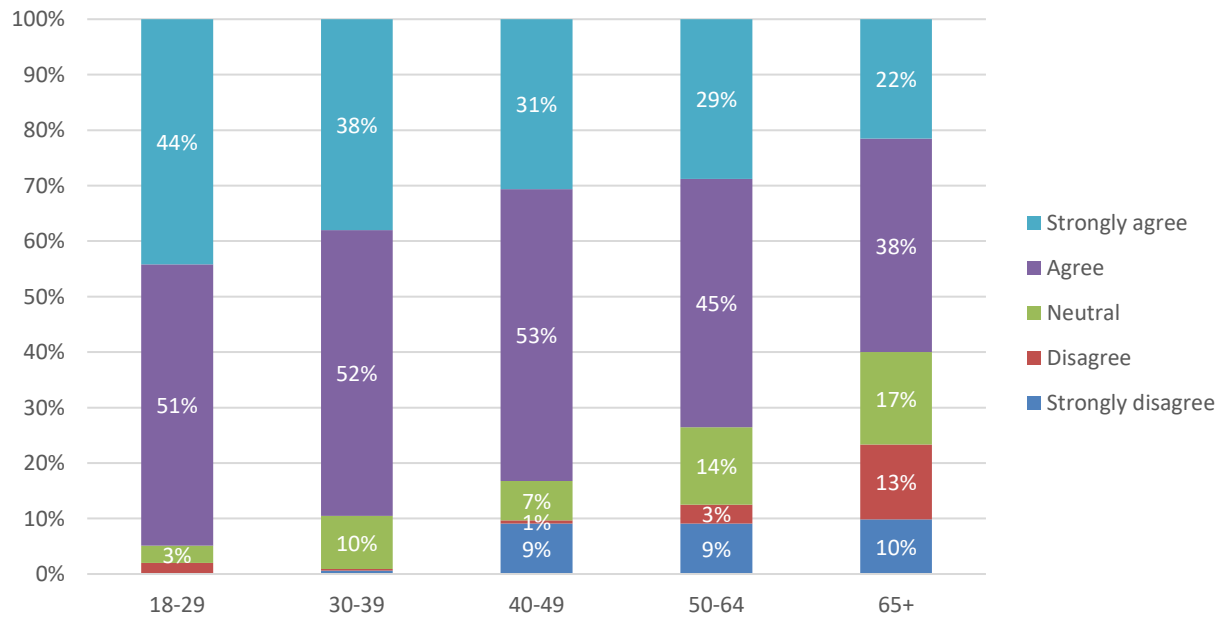
Figure 109. I can identify false or misleading information by respondent age
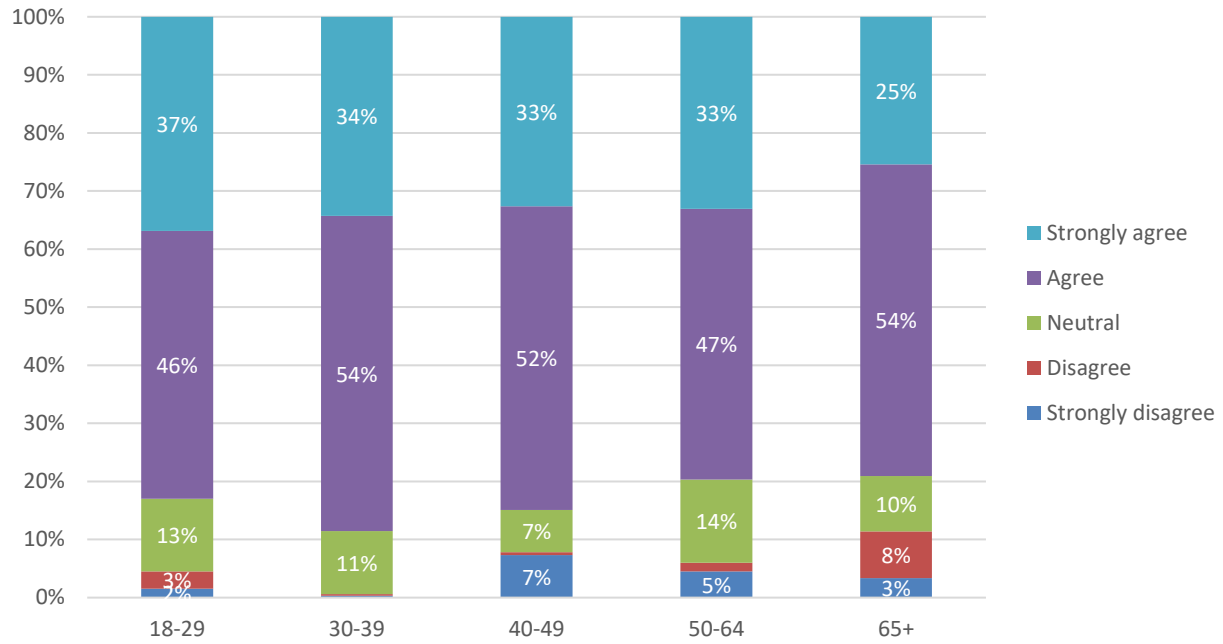
Figure 110. I can recognize and avoid online fraud by respondent age
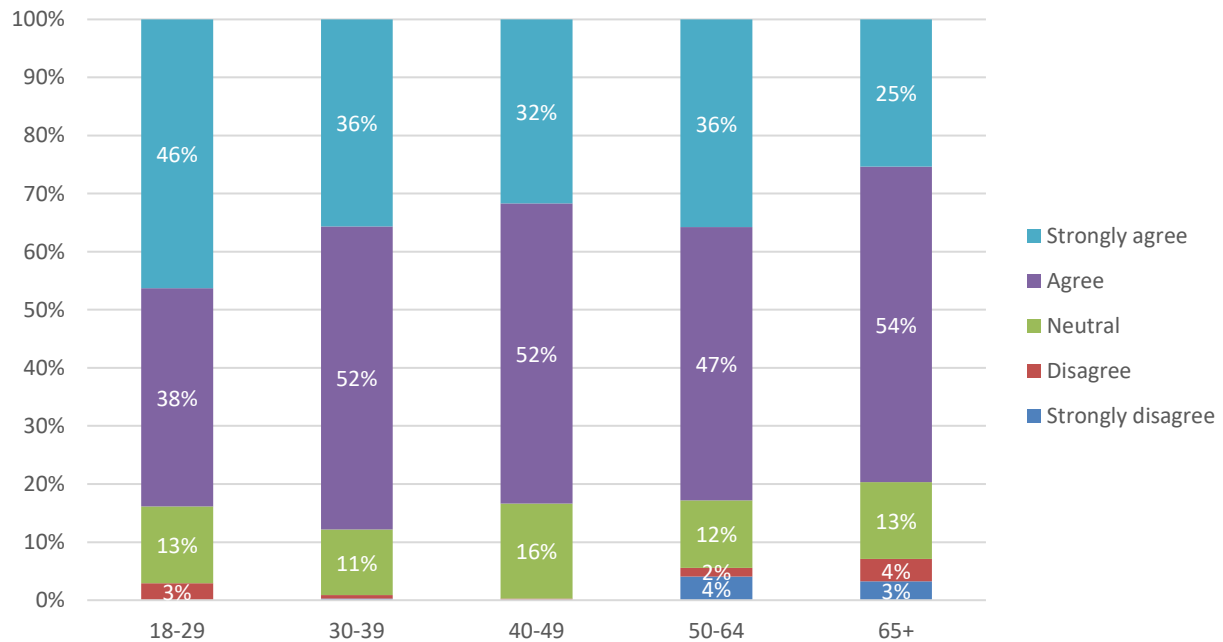
Household questions
What is your age?

Figure 111. Age of respondent
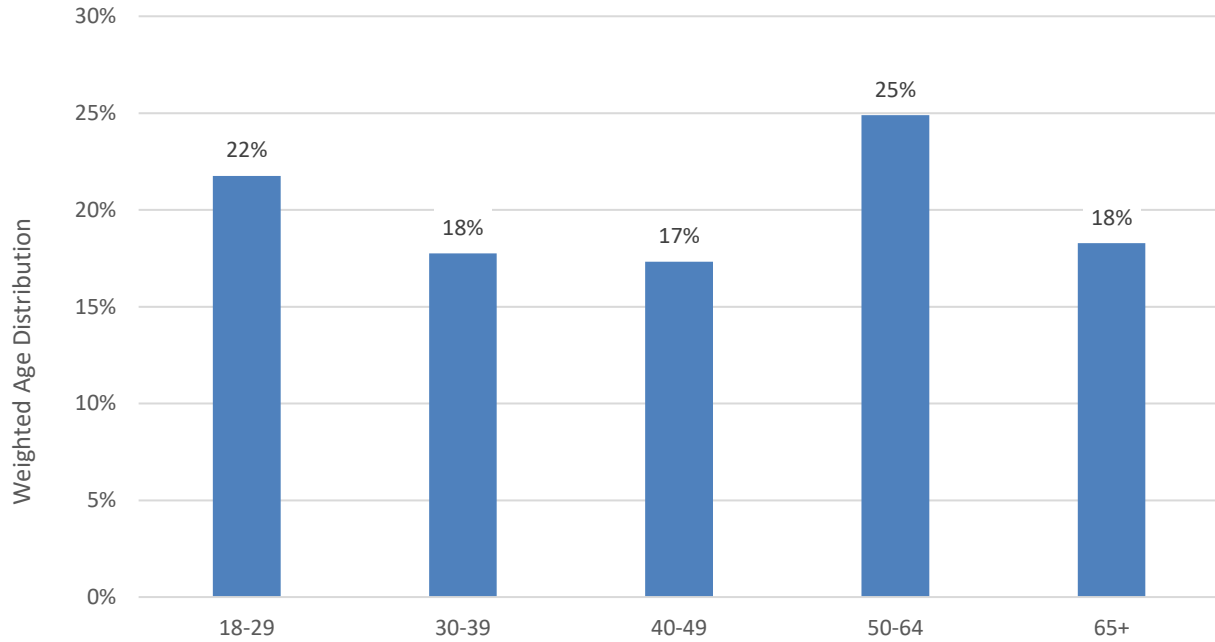
How many people live in your household, and what are their approximate ages?

Figure 112. Percent of households with at least one member in each age category
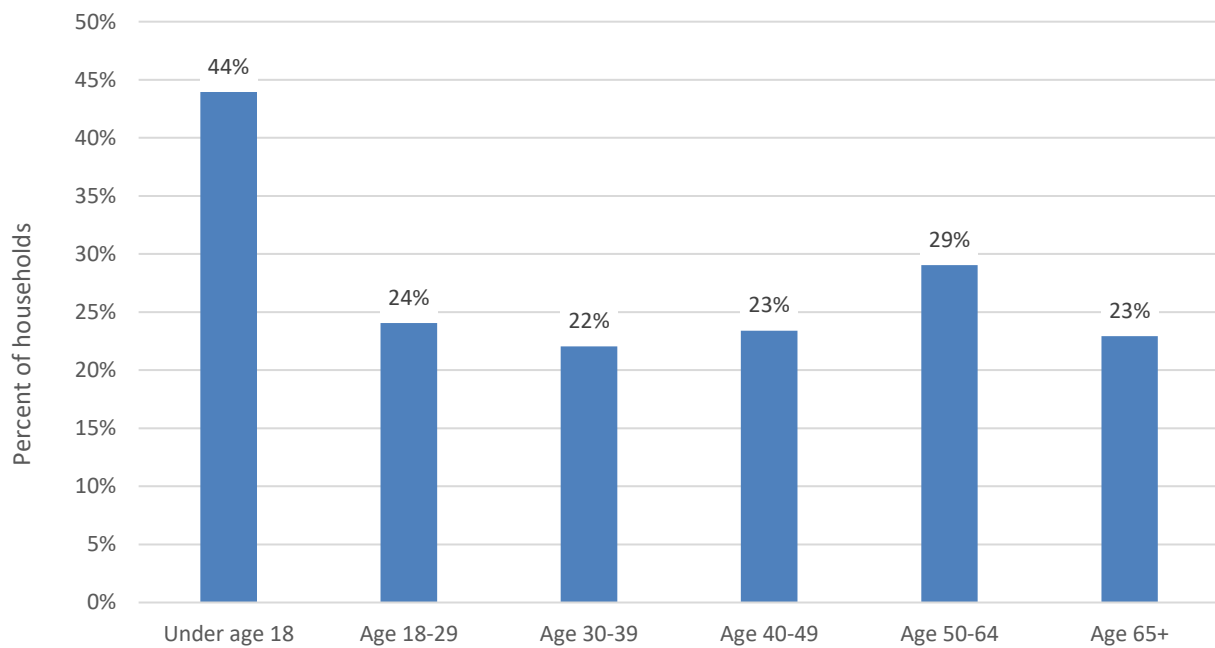
Figure 113. Average number of household members per age category (among households with at least one household member in that age group)
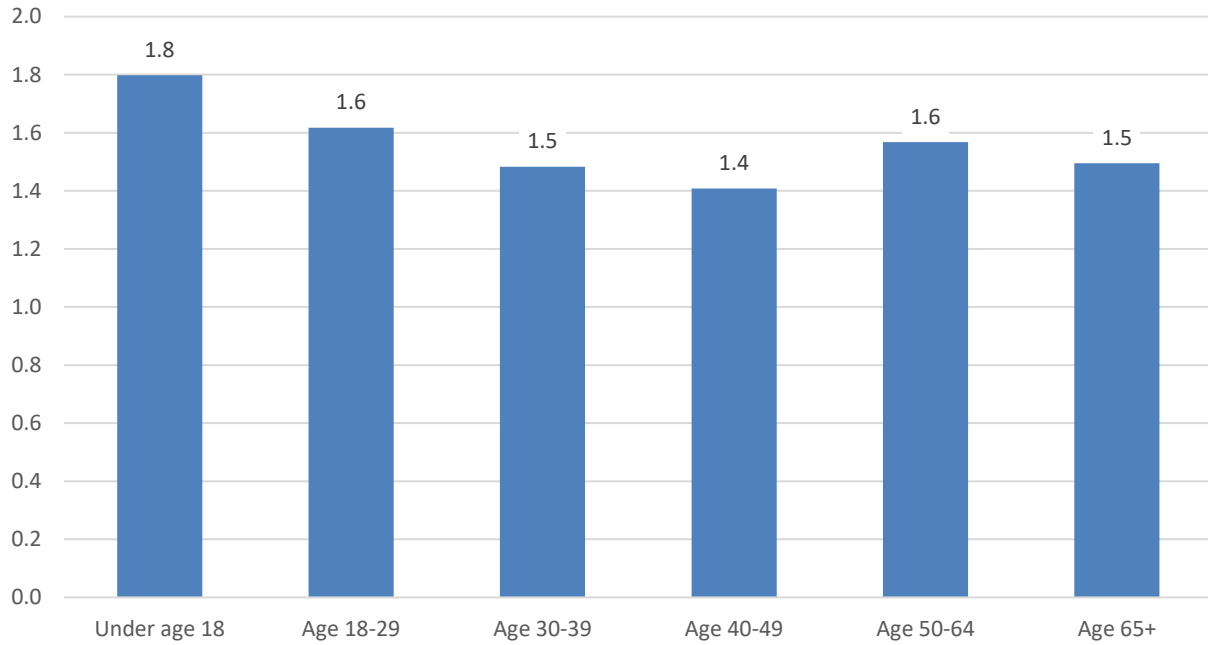
Figure 114. Number of household members (household size)
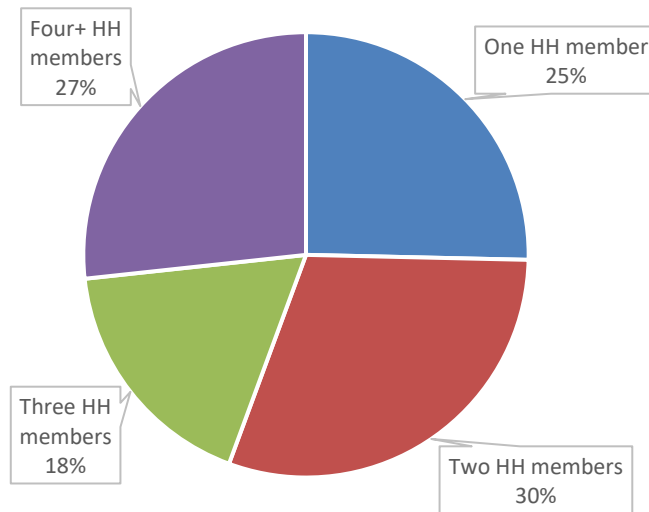
What is your approximate annual household income?

Figure 115. Approximate annual household income

Less than $25,000	$25,000 to $49,999	$50,000 to $74,999	$75,000 to $99,999	$100,000 to $124,999	$125,000 to $149,999	$150,000 to $174,999	$175,000 to $199,999	$200,000 or more
9%	26%	20%	16%	12%	6%	3%	2%	7%
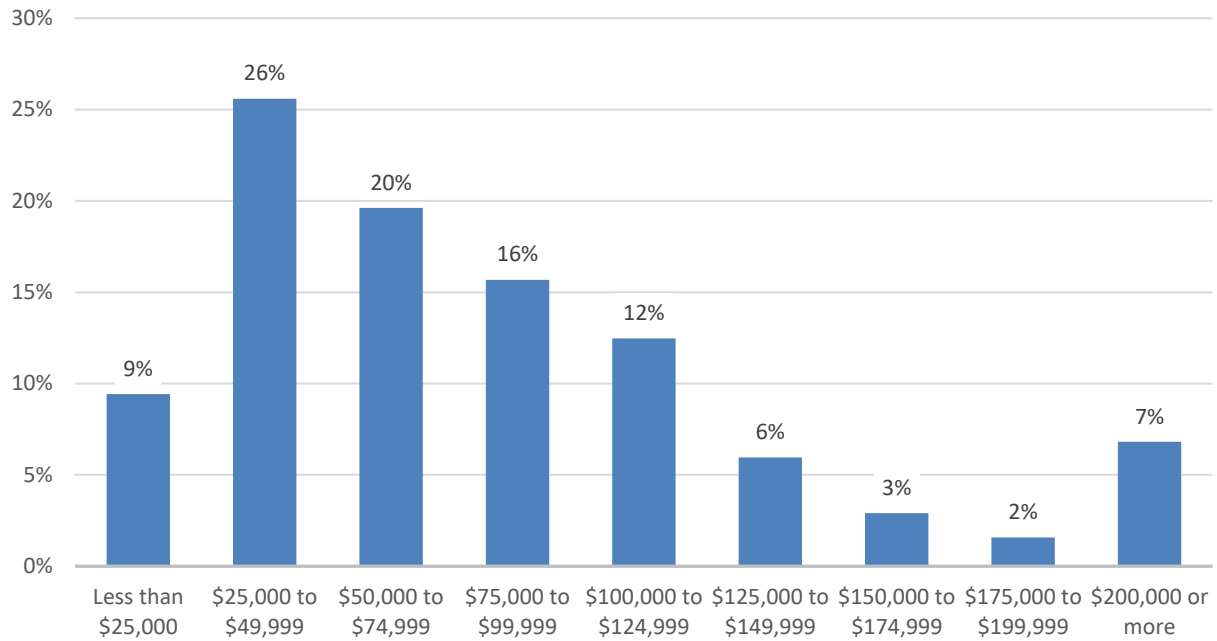
What race/ethnicities are represented in your household?

Figure 116. Race/ethnicity

Black/African American	Asian/Asian American	Hispanic/Latino	Native American/ Indigenous American	White	Middle Eastern/Arab American	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
34%	4%	5%	2%	53%	1%	<1%
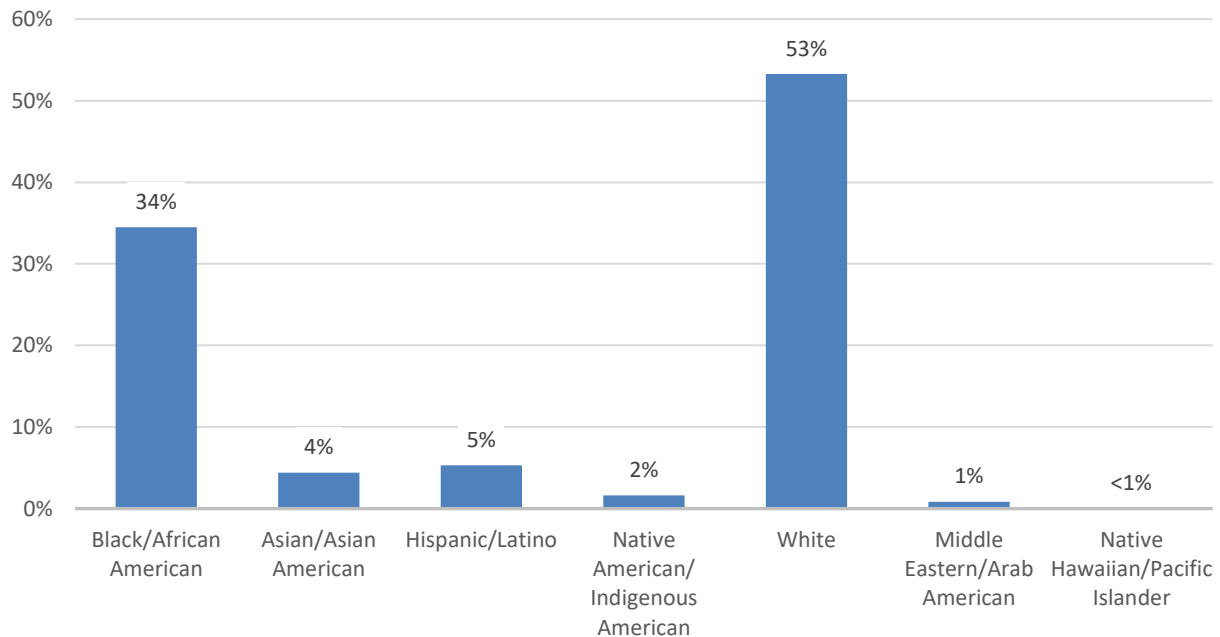
Are you or anyone else living in your household a(n):

Figure 117. Percent of households with at least one household member in each at-risk group
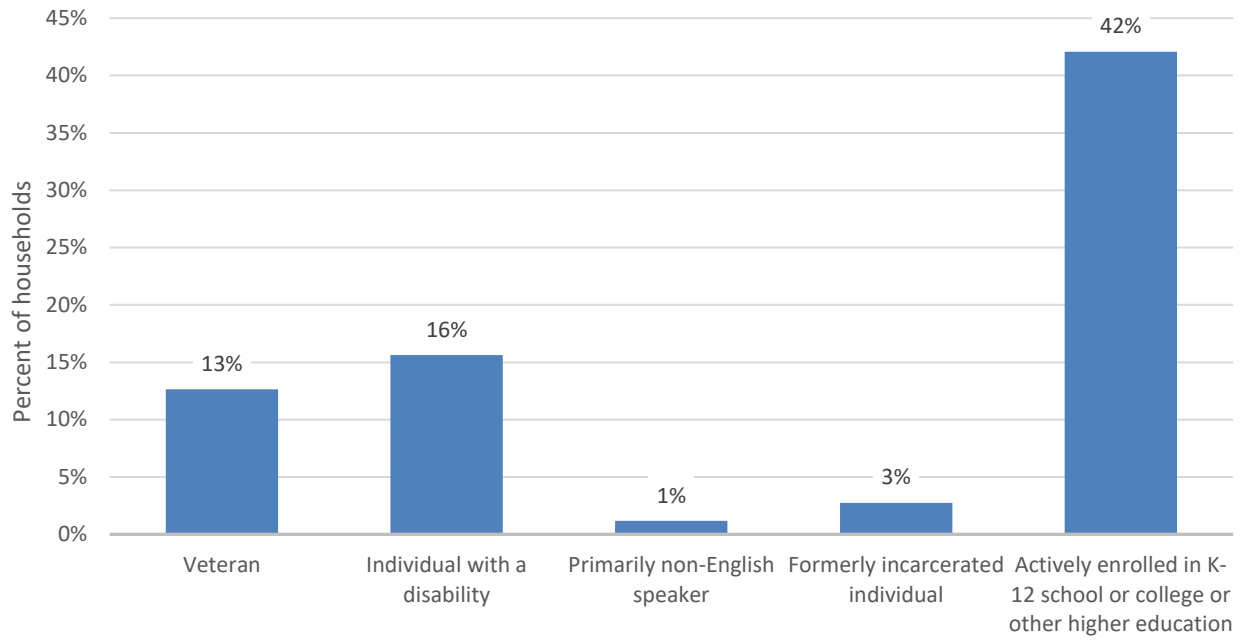
Appendix F: Survey instruments

The State published targeted stakeholder surveys in conjunction with the stakeholder outreach efforts and continued to promote the surveys and encourage stakeholders to submit responses for an extended time during preparation of this Plan. The surveys aligned with the key categories identified in the Plan and included a focus on digital connectivity issues (i.e., "digital equity" in the IIJA's parlance). The surveys were:

1. Workforce development – what organizations are doing to provide or facilitate training for jobs in broadband-related fields.

2. Digital connectivity programs – organizations' and local governments' digital connectivity programs, plans, and coalitions to provide community members skills and tools for participating in broadband-related opportunities.

3. CAIs – what community institutions/organizations are doing to advance Georgians' opportunities to use broadband to work, learn, receive health care, and participate in civic events.

4. Agency asset inventory – infrastructure-related assets that a government entity owns or manages (conduit, fiber, structures, real estate, poles, etc.) and broadband-related workforce development efforts in place.

5. Covered population barriers – identifies unique obstacles to broadband access faced by vulnerable populations and the organizations that serve them.

6. ISPs – identifies recruiting and hiring for broadband-related positions, broadband development strategies, and collaboration with communities to close the digital divide.

Workforce development opportunity survey

Georgia Workforce Development Opportunity Survey

Broadband infrastructure deployment and network operations require a highly skilled workforce. Your responses to this brief survey will help the Georgia Technology Authority identify opportunities for workforce training and readiness programs to prepare residents for new job opportunities in this field. This information will be an important part of Georgia's work toward achieving statewide universal access to high-speed broadband with federal funding through the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) and Digital Equity Planning programs.

1. Contact information

Your name

Your job title

Your e-mail

Your phone number

Organization name

Organization address

Organization website URL

2. Type of organization (one selection only)

○ Internet service provider (ISP)

○ Labor union

○ Trade association

○ Industry certification or standards body

○ Government agency (state, county, local, tribal, or regional consortia)

○ Economic development association or agency

○ Regional or local workforce development board or agency

○ K-12 education (private, charter, public)

○ Higher education organization (all levels, public or private)

○ Trade, technical or vocational school (public, nonprofit, or for-profit)

○ Community based or nonprofit organization

Georgia Workforce Development Opportunity Survey

3. Do you offer workforce development programs for job placement and training in the communications industry in Georgia?

○ Yes

○ No

4. Do you offer training in any of the following industries that have transferable skills that can be applied to communications network deployment? (Select all that apply)

☐ Utilities such as electricity

☐ HVAC

☐ Computer science

☐ Cybersecurity

☐ General electrician

☐ General construction

☐ Other (please specify)

5. If you answered no to Question 3, are you interested in developing programs specifically targeted at employment opportunities in the communications industry?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please describe your interest in developing these programs

Georgia Workforce Development Opportunity Survey

6. What type of workforce development programs do you offer? (Select all that apply)

☐ On-the-job training placement

☐ Standards certification and safety programs

☐ Training programs through a public or private K12 school

☐ Training programs through a school of higher education

☐ Trade or vocational certificate programs

☐ Job placement and recruiting services

☐ Formal apprenticeship opportunities

7. Which of the following communications designations are included in your programs? (Select all that apply)

☐ Construction laborers and heavy equipment operators

☐ Tower, line, equipment, maintenance, and testing specialists

☐ Supervisors / project managers

☐ Network design roles

☐ Locators

8. Does your program specifically reach out to any of the following populations for participation in your programs? (Select all that apply)

☐ Veterans or current military personnel

☐ People with disabilities

☐ Seniors

☐ Incarcerated or formerly incarcerated

☐ Those in low-income households or without reliable housing

☐ Those with a language barrier including English learners

☐ Those with a low level of literacy

☐ Specific racial or ethnic minority group(s)

☐ Those living in rural communities

9. How would you characterize your current capacity for developing and offering training programs to meet current workforce demands in the communications industry? (Select one)

○ Underutilized

○ Adequately utilized

○ At capacity

10. How would you characterize your plans for developing and offering additional programs to meet future workforce demands in the communications industry? (Select one)

☐ We have plans to add capacity

☐ We have no plans to add capacity

☐ We are reducing our training capacity

☐ We are interested in adding capacity, but do not have resources to do so

Please describe your plans for additional or expanded programs or explain what additional resources you would need to add capacity.

[ ]

11. What are the sources of funding for your training programs? (Select all that apply)

☐ Federal agencies and programs

☐ State agencies and programs

☐ County or local funding and programs

☐ Private foundations

☐ Fundraising and community grants

☐ Partnerships with employers

☐ Partnerships with unions or trade associations

☐ Fee-based services

☐ Other (please specify)

[ ]

12. Do you serve "rural" communities?

☐ Yes

☐ No

What types of incentives are effective to recruit both skilled and manual labor to your rural community?

13. Please describe barriers to developing a diverse, skilled workforce in your community that can fill employment opportunities in the communications industry. Additionally, please provide examples or ideas of incentives or programs that can mitigate those barriers to create a diverse pool of highly skilled workers.

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Georgia Workforce Development Opportunity Survey

14. Do you provide any in-house skills training, workforce development, or apprenticeship programs for your employees to support a highly skilled workforce?

○ Yes

○ No

15. If you answered yes above, please identify the types of programs. (Select all that apply)

☐ Mentorship

☐ Certification programs

☐ Apprenticeship

☐ Internship

☐ Sponsorships/scholarships for third-party training and classes

☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

16. In addition to any programs you directly provide, what other sources or programs do you use in Georgia to train and support workforce readiness among your employees? (Select all that apply)

☐ Standards certification and safety programs

☐ Training programs through a public or private K-12 school

☐ Training programs through a school of higher education

☐ Trade or vocational certificate programs

☐ Formal apprenticeship programs

17. What sources or programs do you use to recruit and hire employees, including technicians, linemen, construction laborers and managers, and similar positions? (Select all that apply)

☐ Internet-based employment posting sites

☐ Workforce development and community job placement centers

☐ Communications industry specific training classes

☐ Third-party hiring and recruitment firms

☐ Advertisements in relevant trade association publications and websites

☐ Incentivizing employee referrals

18. Do you have programs or incentives to support diversity among your employees when considering methods to attract, retain, and promote a skilled workforce?

19. Please describe your vision for workforce readiness programs, recruitment practices, and wrap around services to support broadband expansion in Georgia over the next five years.

Digital connectivity program inventory survey

* 1. Which category best describes your organization? Please select all that apply.

- [ ] K - 12 school
- [ ] Community college and institution of higher education
- [ ] Library
- [ ] Medical and health care provider
- [ ] State government
- [ ] County government
- [ ] Municipal government
- [ ] Council of governments (COG) or regional authority
- [ ] Tribal government
- [ ] Public housing authority

- [ ] Civil rights organization
- [ ] Workforce development and adult literacy organization
- [ ] Internet Service Provider (ISP)
- [ ] Business
- [ ] Regional or industry association or commission
- [ ] Non-profit organization that represents individuals with disabilities
- [ ] Non-profit organization that represents veterans
- [ ] Non-profit organization that represents aging individuals
- [ ] Non-profit organization that represents incarcerated individuals
- [ ] Non-profit organization that represents English learners

2. Has your organization created a broadband and/or digital equity plan?

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No

3. Is your organization part of a broadband coalition?

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No

* 4. Please provide the information for a point of contact in your organization.

Name	
Organization name	
Address	
Address 2	
City/Town	
State/Province	
ZIP/Postal Code	
Email Address	
Phone Number	

Georgia Technology Authority Digital Connectivity Program Inventory

Program Details

Digital equity programs aim to ensure that communities have the skills, technology, and capacity to fully engage in the digital economy. Certain programs focus on populations which include low-income, seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, incarcerated, English learners, ethnic minorities, and people in rural areas. Examples of digital equity programs include those that promote computer skills, internet access, and computing device access.

5. Does your organization offer digital equity programs?

○ Yes

○ No

Georgia Technology Authority Digital Connectivity Program Inventory

Program Details

6. What is the name of the program? (Please note there will be opportunities to provide information on additional programs below. Answers should only pertain to a single program)

Program name

7. What aspects of digital equity does the program address? Please select at least one.

☐ Availability and affordability of internet

☐ Digital literacy

☐ Data privacy and cybersecurity

☐ Desktop computers, laptops, or tablet and technical support

☐ Online accessibility and inclusivity

8. Does the program focus on certain populations? Check all that apply.

☐ Individuals with disabilities

☐ Veterans

☐ Aging individuals (60 and above)

☐ Incarcerated individuals

☐ Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners; and have low levels of literacy

☐ Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area

☐ Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group

☐ Individuals who live in a covered household (household income is lower than 150% of the poverty level)

☐ No particular focus on a population

☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

9. What is the project budget?

○ $1 to $24,999   ○ $100,000 to $249,999

○ $25,000 to $49,999   ○ $250,000 to $499,999

○ $50,000 to $99,999   ○ Over $500,000

10. How much does the program cost to the participant?

Cost in dollars   [   ]

11. Please give us a sense of the geography you serve.

○ State-wide

○ County-wide

○ City-wide

○ Neighborhood-wide

○ Other (please specify)

12. How long has the program been active, in months?

Program length in
months

13. How many people were served by the program in the 2022 calendar year?

○ Under 25 people

○ 26 to 50 people

○ 51 to 100 people

○ More than 100 people

14. How many users do you expect to serve over the life of the program?

○ 1 to 50

○ 51 to 100 people

○ 101 to 250 people

○ 251 to 500 people

○ More than 500 people

15. If you had the resources, would you want to scale the project to serve more communities and people?

○ Yes

○ No

16. Does your organization have another digital equity program?

○ Yes

○ No

Georgia Technology Authority Digital Connectivity Program Inventory

Program Details

17. What is the name of the program? (Please note there will be opportunities to provide information on additional programs below. Answers should only pertain to a single program)

Program name [   ]

18. What aspects of digital equity does the program address? Please select at least one.

- ☐ Availability and affordability of internet
- ☐ Digital literacy
- ☐ Data privacy and cybersecurity
- ☐ Desktop computers, laptops, or tablet and technical support
- ☐ Online accessibility and Inclusivity

19. Does the program focus on certain populations? Check all that apply.

☐ Individuals with disabilities

☐ Veterans

☐ Aging individuals (60 and above)

☐ Incarcerated individuals

☐ Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners; and have low levels of literacy

☐ Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area

☐ Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group

☐ Individuals who live in a covered household (household income is lower than 150% of the poverty level)

☐ No particular focus on a population

☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

20. What is the project budget?

○ $1 to $24,999   ○ $250,000 to $499,999

○ $25,000 to $49,999   ○ Over $500,000

○ $50,000 to $99,999   ○ N/A

○ $100,000 to $249,999

21. How much does the program cost to the participant?

Cost in dollars   [   ]

22. Please give us a sense of the geography you serve.

○ State-wide

○ County-wide

○ City-wide

○ Neighborhood-wide

○ Other (please specify)

23. How long has the program been active, in months?

Program length in **months**

24. How many people were served by the program in the 2022 calendar year?

○ Under 25 people

○ 26 to 50 people

○ 51 to 100 people

○ More than 100 people

25. How many users do you expect to serve over the life of the program?

○ 1 to 50

○ 51 to 100 people

○ 101 to 250 people

○ 251 to 500 people

○ More than 500 people

26. If you had the resources, would you want to scale the project to serve more communities and people?

○ Yes

○ No

27. Does your organization have another digital equity program?

○ Yes

○ No

Georgia Technology Authority Digital Connectivity Program Inventory

Program Details

28. What is the name of the program? (Please note there will be opportunities to provide information on additional programs below. Answers should only pertain to a single program)

Program name [   ]

29. What aspects of digital equity does the program address? Please select at least one.

☐ Availability and affordability of internet

☐ Digital literacy

☐ Data privacy and cybersecurity

☐ Desktop computers, laptops, or tablet and technical support

☐ Online accessibility and inclusivity

30. Does the program focus on certain populations? Check all that apply.

☐ Individuals with disabilities

☐ Veterans

☐ Aging individuals (60 and above)

☐ Incarcerated individuals

☐ Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners; and have low levels of literacy

☐ Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area

☐ Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group

☐ Individuals who live in a covered household (household income is lower than 150% of the poverty level)

☐ No particular focus on a population

☐ Other (please specify)

31. What is the project budget?

○ $1 to $24,999   ○ $250,000 to $499,999

○ $25,000 to $49,999   ○ Over $500,000

○ $50,000 to $99,999   ○ N/A

○ $100,000 to $249,999

32. How much does the program cost to the participant?

Cost in dollars

33. Please give us a sense of the geography you serve.

○ State-wide

○ County-wide

○ City-wide

○ Neighborhood-wide

○ Other (please specify)

34. How long has the program been active, in months?

Program length in **months**

35. How many people were served by the program in the 2022 calendar year?

○ Under 25 people

○ 26 to 50 people

○ 51 to 100 people

○ More than 100 people

36. How many users do you expect to serve over the life of the program?

○ 1 to 50

○ 51 to 100 people

○ 101 to 250 people

○ 251 to 500 people

○ More than 500 people

37. If you had the resources, would you want to scale the project to serve more communities and people?

○ Yes

○ No

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Georgia Technology Authority Digital Connectivity Program Inventory

Planned Programs

38. Is your organization in the process of developing a digital equity program?

◯ Yes

◯ No

39. What kind of digital equity program(s) is your organization developing? Please select the categories that best fits the program type.

☐ Digital skills and literacy

☐ Data privacy and cybersecurity

☐ Devices (Laptops, computers, tablets)

☐ Technical support

☐ Digital navigators

☐ Broadband access

☐ Creating accessible and inclusive internet content

Other (please specify)

```
[                                                ]
[                                                ]
[                                                ]
```

40. Does your organization want to develop a digital equity program?

○ Yes

○ No

41. What kind of digital equity program(s) is your organization interested in developing? Please select the categories that best fits the program type.

☐ Digital skills and literacy

☐ Data privacy and cybersecurity

☐ Devices (Laptops, computers, tablets)

☐ Technical support

☐ Digital navigators

☐ Broadband access

☐ Creating accessible and inclusive internet content

Georgia Technology Authority Digital Connectivity Program Inventory

42. Please describe how access to affordable, reliable, and secure high-speed broadband by the communities that you serve may impact programmatic outcomes of your organization?

43. Do you have metrics to measure progress on your programmatic outcomes?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please describe or provide a URL link with documentation.

Please provide examples or a discussion of metrics that you believe would be useful to track broadband related inputs and outcomes that are relevant to your mission, programs, and services.

44. Economic and workforce development outcomes - input and outcome metrics

45. Educational outcomes - input and outcome metrics

46. Health outcomes - input and outcome metrics

47. Civic and social engagement outcomes - input and outcome metrics

48. Delivery of other essential services outcomes - input and outcome metrics

Community anchor institution survey

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Georgia Technology Authority Community Anchor Institution Survey

Community anchor institutions play a critical role in facilitating greater use of broadband by underserved and vulnerable populations. Your responses to this brief survey will help the Georgia Technology Authority identify programs to advance residents' opportunities to use broadband to work, learn, receive health care, and participate in civic events. This information will be an important part of Georgia's work toward achieving statewide access to high-speed broadband with federal funding through the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) and Digital Equity Planning programs.

* 1. Contact information

Your name	
Your job title	
Your e-mail	
Your phone number	
Organization name	
Organization address	
Organization website URL	
Organization's number of employees	
Please indicate if your organization serves statewide, regionally, or locally	

2. Choose the option that best describes your organization. Select the one that best applies.

○ K-12 school

○ Higher education entity

○ Library

○ Health clinic, health center, hospital, or other medical provider

○ Public safety entity

○ Public housing organization (including HUD-assisted housing and tribal housing organizations)

○ Neighborhood organization and community center

○ Faith-based organization

○ Community support organization that facilitates use of broadband service by low-income or other underserved populations

3. Which of the following programs or services do you offer to facilitate the use of broadband services by your constituents or clients? Select all that apply.

☐ Support for applicants to broadband subsidy programs such as the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

☐ Loans or donations of devices (computers, tablets) to access the internet

☐ Hotspots and free or subsidized internet access

☐ Cybersecurity training

☐ Other digital literacy training

☐ Training, equipment, subsidized services, or other resources to facilitate access to telehealth and telemedicine services

☐ Training teachers of broadband skills and digital literacy

☐ Developing and distributing accessible online content or devices designed for us by persons with disabilities

☐ Developing and distributing accessible online content directed at populations with specific needs, such as seniors, low-income residents, those with low-literacy, and those whose first language is not English

☐ Broadband internet access services at community centers or other gathering spaces used by clients and constituents

☐ Funding of programs that provide any of the above programs, including broadband infrastructure, devices, and subsidies to support affordability

☐ Program development and planning of internet-related services

☐ Advocacy for digital inclusion, affordability, and the internet-related needs of vulnerable populations

☐ Emergency and disaster relief services such as evacuation centers, charging stations, replacement equipment, and information on grants, loans, and services to those impacted by disasters

☐ My organization does **not** offer programs that facilitate the use of broadband internet services

☐ Other (please specify)

```


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Georgia Technology Authority Community Anchor Institution Survey

4. Is your organization located on Tribal land, affiliated with a Tribal or Native entity, or primarily serving Tribal or Native populations?

◯ Yes

◯ No

5. Does your organization conduct outreach or tailor its internet-related services to the needs of any of the following communities or groups? Select all that apply.

☐ Veterans or current military personnel

☐ People with disabilities

☐ Seniors

☐ Incarcerated or formerly incarcerated residents

☐ Those in low-income households or without reliable housing

☐ Other (please specify)

☐ Those with a language barrier including English learners

☐ Those with a low level of literacy

☐ Specific racial or ethnic minority group(s)

☐ Those living in rural communities

☐ Not applicable

6. Based on your organization's observations and experience, please describe the barriers and obstacles (e.g. affordability, lack of digital literacy, language barriers) that prevent members of the communities your organization serves, including Tribal and Native populations, from accessing or using broadband internet services.

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7. Do all of your organization's locations, offices, or community centers have access to broadband internet speeds of at least 1 Gigabit per second (Gbps) symmetrical (both upload and download)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know

If **no**, please provide the addresses of the locations where your organization does not have access to broadband internet services of at least 1 Gbps symmetrical.

```
                                                                      
                                                                      
                                                                      
                                                                      
```

8. If your organization does not have access to, or does not purchase, service with symmetrical speeds of at least 1 Gbps, please describe why. Select all that apply.

☐ Service is unavailable

☐ Service is unreliable

☐ Service is expensive

☐ Customer service is inadequate

☐ Our operations do not require Gigabit-level services

☐ I do not know if 1 Gbps service is available at my location

☐ Other (please specify)

```
                                                                      
```

9. Does your current internet service meet the needs of your organization to deliver broadband-related programs to your clients and constituents?

☐ Yes

☐ No, service is unavailable

☐ No, service is unreliable

☐ No, service is expensive

☐ No, customer service is inadequate

☐ No, service is too complicated to set up and/or maintain

☐ Redundant connectivity necessary for our operations is too expensive/unavailable

☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

10. How essential is symmetrical Gigabit connectivity at your facilities to your ability to deliver your broadband-related services?

1 - Not important	2	3	4	5 - Critically important
○	○	○	○	○

11. Does your organization provide access to broadband internet services to clients, constituents, or visitors at each of your locations?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If **yes,** does your broadband internet service provide sufficient capacity to accommodate peak demand for such services at all of your locations? If **no,** is a lack of access to adequate internet services at your location preventing you from serving users?

[   ]

12. Is it critical to your organization's mission and service delivery to maintain communications with **critical facilities** such as hospitals, schools, data centers, and public safety agencies during natural disasters and emergencies?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please briefly describe your organization's need to remain connected to critical facilities and whether you believe your organization's current communications services meet this need.

___

13. Has your organization been consulted on disaster planning, emergency communications, or disaster recovery by your communications service provider or a local/regional government agency?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please briefly describe any plans or reports you think would be useful to the State's broadband and emergency communications planning efforts.

___

14. If you operate or sponsor any workforce development or training programs in the fields of telecommunications or technology, please select all that apply.

☐ We do not sponsor programs

☐ Mentorships

☐ Certification programs

☐ Registered apprenticeships

☐ Unregistered apprenticeships

☐ Pre-apprenticeships

☐ Internships

☐ Digital literacy training for specific employment opportunities

☐ Job placement and recruitment services

☐ Sponsorships/scholarships for third-party training and classes

☐ Other (please specify)

___

15. Would your organization offer additional broadband-related services or programs to its constituents or clients if it had additional resources?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please describe those additional broadband-related services and the additional resources your organization would need to offer them (e.g. funding, skilled workforce, access to broadband internet services with faster speeds or more capacity).

16. Please describe how your organization can collaborate with the Georgia Technology Authority and participate in its efforts to achieve statewide access to high-speed broadband.

Agency asset inventory survey

Georgia Technology Authority Agency Asset Inventory Survey

By completing this short questionnaire, you will help the Georgia Technology Authority identify infrastructure-related assets that may potentially help facilitate broadband deployment in Georgia. As the State engages with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to extend network footprints and services, this information will support Georgia's goal of optimizing federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funding to achieve statewide access to high-speed broadband.

* 1. Please provide your contact information

Agency name	
Government level (State, regional, county, local, tribal)	
Name of jurisdiction	
First and last name	
Title	
Email	
Phone number	
Agency website URL (if any)	

2. Does your agency own or manage physical assets (i.e. conduit, fiber, structures, real estate, poles, etc.) that are available for lease to Internet Service Providers (ISP) for broadband deployment?

☐ Yes

☐ No

What information about these leasable assets would you like the State to include in its broadband planning and communications with ISPs?

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                             │
│                                                             │
│                                                             │
│                                                             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

3. Will your agency oversee capital construction projects between now and 2027 that include opportunities for the placement of communications facilities by your agency, other state or local agencies, regional or local consortia, or ISPs?

☐ Yes

☐ No

What information about these projects (i.e. scope, location, schedule) would you like included in State broadband planning and in communications with ISPs?

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                             │
│                                                             │
│                                                             │
│                                                             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

4. Has your agency analyzed workforce readiness (i.e., the availability of skilled labor) in Georgia as it may impact State broadband policies and deployment goals?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please provide a URL link where relevant documents, presentations, or analyses are located or send to the following email address: GTAbroadband@ctcnet.us

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                             │
│                                                             │
│                                                             │
│                                                             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

5. Does your agency have a role in workforce development that would support wired or wireless broadband deployment (including training and recruitment for equipment technicians, cable installation and repair, and construction jobs)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please describe programs or initiatives that your agency operates or supports or relevant programs operated by other agencies.

[ ]

6. Are you aware of, or does your agency have reason to track and monitor frequent or widespread broadband or other communications outages that have significant impact on your community (or, if you represent a statewide organization, on the communities in Georgia)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please describe your agency's role in monitoring or tracking communications reliability in your community and discuss the impact of significant outages.

[ ]

7. Are you aware of, or is your agency involved in, planning efforts or development of regulations related to reliable and resilient emergency-level broadband or other communications services, especially services for critical facilities in Georgia (e.g. hospitals, schools, evacuation sites, utilities, data centers, public safety locations)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please provide a URL link to any publicly available materials relating to these issues and briefly describe the relevant issues related to critical facilities, including planning for climate and weather-related hazards. You may also email these materials to GTAbroadband@ctcnet.us

[ ]

8. Has your agency developed any policies, regulations, or guidance regarding emergency communications, network redundancy, climate resilience, disaster preparedness, or disaster recovery planning applicable to the broadband and communications industry in Georgia?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please provide a URL link to any publicly available documents and briefly describe policies and other materials that you believe would be helpful to Georgia's broadband planning efforts. You may also email these materials to GTAbroadband@ctcnet.us

9. Has your agency developed policies or strategic planning documents that will facilitate broadband access efforts in Georgia (e.g. publicly available information that directly addresses digital equity, infrastructure deployment, economic development, network resilience, partnerships, business planning, or other related efforts)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please briefly summarize the material and provide a URL link or email information to GTAbroadband@ctcnet.us

10. If applicable please share information regarding broadband-related planning efforts of other Georgia state and local agencies or contact information for agencies involved in broadband-related planning efforts, that you believe would be helpful to GTA's broadband planning efforts.

11. Please describe how your agency can collaborate with GTA and participate in its efforts to achieve statewide universal access to high-speed broadband.

Covered population barriers survey

Georgia Technology Authority Covered Populations Broadband Barriers Survey

Organizations that serve or represent vulnerable populations have a critical role in shedding light on the unique barriers such populations face, and how their unique needs can best be addressed. Your responses to this brief survey will help the Georgia Technology Authority identify opportunities for programs to advance vulnerable residents' full participation in broadband-related opportunities to work, learn, receive health care, and participate in civic events. This information will be an important part of Georgia's work toward achieving statewide access to high-speed broadband with federal funding through the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) and Digital Equity programs.

1. Contact information

Your name	
Your job title	
Your e-mail	
Your phone number	
Organization name	
Organization address	
Organization website URL	
Organization's number of employees	

Georgia Technology Authority Covered Populations
Broadband Barriers Survey
Digital Literacy and Digital Skills

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
⦿ 1	○ 2	○ 3	○ 4	○ 5
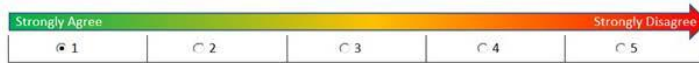
Georgia Technology Authority Covered Populations Broadband Barriers Survey

Accessible Content

2. Does your organization provide programs and services that are primarily targeted to any of the following communities? (Select all that apply)

☐ Individuals with disabilities

☐ Veterans or current military personnel

☐ Aging individuals

☐ Incarcerated individuals

☐ Individuals with low levels of literacy

☐ Individuals with a language barrier

☐ Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area

☐ Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group

☐ No particular focus on a population or community

☐ Other (please specify)

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Georgia Technology Authority Covered Populations Broadband Barriers Survey

Internet Service

3. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements describing individuals from the population(s) you serve or represent. On a scale of 1 - 5, where 1 is "strongly agree" and 5 is "strongly disagree" as representing on the spectrum.

	1 - Strongly Agree	2	3	4	5 - Strongly Disagree
Their households have access to some type of home internet service	○	○	○	○	○
The available internet service is high-speed, sufficient for their needs, and reliable	○	○	○	○	○
The available internet service is affordable.	○	○	○	○	○
Their households can choose from among more than one provider for high-speed, reliable, and affordable broadband service	○	○	○	○	○

4. Are there unique barriers to reliable, affordable, and high-speed internet service for the population(s) you serve?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please describe these barriers to accessing reliable, affordable, and high-speed internet service:

**Georgia Technology Authority Covered Populations
Broadband Barriers Survey**

Access to Computers

5. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements describing individuals from the population(s) you serve or represent. On a scale of 1 - 5, where 1 is "strongly agree" and 5 is "strongly disagree" as representing on the spectrum.

	1 - Strongly Agree	2	3	4	5 - Strongly Disagree
There are computers capable of utilizing highspeed internet services in the household of the populations we serve or represent.	○	○	○	○	○
The households can troubleshoot computer issues.	○	○	○	○	○
The households can afford computer repairs or service.	○	○	○	○	○
The households have enough devices to serve their needs.	○	○	○	○	○
There are public computers that are convenient to use and close by to these households.	○	○	○	○	○

6. Are there unique barriers to accessing home computers for the population(s) you serve?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please describe these barriers to accessing computers and similar devices:

7. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements describing individuals from the population(s) you serve or represent. On a scale of 1 - 5, where 1 is "strongly agree" and 5 is "strongly disagree" as representing on the spectrum.

	1 - Strongly Agree	2	3	4	5 - Strongly Disagree
Individuals can find, understand, evaluate, create, and communicate digital information.	○	○	○	○	○
Individuals can use technologies appropriately and effectively to retrieve information, interpret results, and judge the quality of that information.	○	○	○	○	○
Individuals can use the internet to support education, employment, health, and personal needs.	○	○	○	○	○
Individuals have access to convenient and comprehensive digital literacy training.	○	○	○	○	○

8. Are there unique barriers to digital skills for the population(s) your serve?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please describe these barriers to acquiring necessary digital skills:

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9. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements describing individuals from the population(s) you serve or represent. On a scale of 1 - 5, where 1 is "strongly agree" and 5 is "strongly disagree" as representing on the spectrum.

	1 - Strongly Agree	2	3	4	5 - Strongly Disagree
Individuals have access to meaningful website content that is written in plain language and is appropriate for the targeted user or audience.	○	○	○	○	○
Individuals have access to meaningful website content that is accurately translated into necessary languages.	○	○	○	○	○
Individuals have access to meaningful website content that can be read by a screen reader.	○	○	○	○	○
Individuals have access to meaningful website content with closed captioning.	○	○	○	○	○
Individuals have access to adequate and appropriate assistive technologies to support access to the internet and use of website content by people with disabilities.	○	○	○	○	○

10. Are there unique barriers to accessible content for the population(s) your serve?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please describe these barriers to accessible content:

![gta logo]

Georgia Technology Authority Covered Populations
Broadband Barriers Survey
Data Privacy and Cyber Security

11. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements describing individuals from the population(s) you serve or represent. On a scale of 1 - 5, where 1 is "strongly agree" and 5 is "strongly disagree" as representing on the spectrum.

	1 - Strongly Agree	2	3	4	5 - Strongly Disagree
Individuals know how to protect their information online.	○	○	○	○	○
Individuals can recognize a phishing scam or other types of scams and illegal activity.	○	○	○	○	○
Individuals use anti-virus and anti-malware software on their computers.	○	○	○	○	○

12. Are there unique barriers to data privacy and cyber security for the population(s) your serve?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please describe these barriers to acquiring literacy in data privacy and cyber security:

![gta logo]

Georgia Technology Authority Covered Populations Broadband Barriers Survey

Initiatives to Address Barriers

Thinking about the unique barriers you discussed:

13. What types of programs and initiatives would you recommend to address these barriers?

14. Does your organization currently offer any of these types of programs or initiatives?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please describe if you are interested in expanding your programs and, if so, what types of resources would you need to expand:

15. Would your organization be interested in adding new programs to its current portfolio?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, what types of resources do you believe would be necessary to add new programs to your current portfolio?

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Georgia Technology Authority Covered Populations Broadband Barriers Survey
Programmatic Impact of Broadband Access

16. Please describe how access to affordable, reliable, and secure high-speed broadband by the communities that you serve may impact the programmatic outcomes of your organization.

17. Do you have metrics to measure progress on your programmatic outcomes?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please describe:

Please provide examples or a discussion of metrics that you believe would be useful to track broadband related inputs and outcomes that are relevant to your mission, programs, and services.

18. Economic and workforce development outcomes - input and outcome metrics

19. Educational outcomes - input and outcome metrics

20. Health outcomes - input and outcome metrics

21. Civic and social engagement outcomes - input and outcome metrics

22. Delivery of other essential services outcomes - input and outcome metrics

Internet service provider engagement survey

Georgia Internet Service Provider Engagement Survey

The Georgia Technology Authority seeks your input on a range of broadband-related issues. Your responses to this brief survey will be an important part of Georgia's work toward achieving statewide universal access to high-speed broadband with federal funding through the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) and Digital Equity Planning programs.

1. Contact Information

Your name	
Your job title	
Your email	
Your phone number	
Organization name	
Organization address	
Organization website URL	
Organization's number of employees	

2. Choose the option that best describes your organization and the services it offers:

	Internet service provider (ISP)	Other provider
Provider type		

3. What recruitment and hiring sources does your organization use to hire technicians, lineworkers, engineers, construction laborers and managers, and similar positions? (Select all that apply)

☐ Internet-based employment posting sites

☐ Workforce development and community job placement centers

☐ Communications industry-specific training classes

☐ Third-party hiring and recruitment firms

☐ Advertisements in trade association publications and websites

☐ Incentivizing employee referrals

4. Does your organization offer, sponsor, or participate in any workforce development or apprenticeship programs?

○ Yes

○ No

5. If you answered yes to Q.4, please specify the type of programs. (Select all that apply)

☐ Mentorship

☐ Certification programs

☐ Apprenticeship

☐ Internship

☐ Sponsorships/scholarships for third-party training and classes

☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

6. How would you propose to work with Georgia on workforce development issues related to broadband deployment, including programs to support diversity among your organization's employees?

7. Does your organization participate in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)?

○ Yes

○ No

Appendix G: Public comments

This appendix lists categories of changes made to this Plan to incorporate public comments that were received. GTA reviewed and responded in writing to each comment that was submitted, although some did not require a revision to the Plan. The public comment process is described in Section 4.1.2. More information regarding the comments received on the Plan – and GTA's actions taken in response – can be found in the Record of Public Comments and Actions Taken submitted to NTIA with this Plan.

Table 59. Changes to Plan from public comment

Comment	Document updates
Comments from organizations that identified themselves as digital connectivity assets and that requested inclusion in the state's digital connectivity asset inventory	Added organizations to Table 8 in Section 3.1.1, including AARP Georgia; Advanced Technology Development Center at Georgia Tech; Atlanta Regional Workforce Development Board; Bank On Georgia; Circles of West Georgia; Coastal ReEntry and Veterans Coalition, Inc.; Compudopt; Cxmmunity; Digitunity; Empowr; Free I.T. Athens; Fulton Atlanta Community Action Authority; Georgia College & State University; Georgia Council on American Indian Concerns; Georgia Department of Human Services – Division of Family and Children Services; Georgia High School High Tech Program; Hope for Youth, Inc.; Latino Community Fund of Georgia; M.E.N.S. Wear, Inc; Workforce Institute, Must Ministries; Phoenix Elite Solutions, LLC; Reentry Partnership Housing; Saving Our Sons & Sisters International; STE(A)M Truck, Technologist of Color; TechBridge; TechSmart for Seniors, Inc.; Unite Georgia; Working Concepts, Inc.
Support for specific elements of the Plan	In their comments, organizations including but not limited to AARP Georgia; Benton Institute for Broadband & Society; Comcast; Compudopt; Digitunity; EducationSuperHighway; Minority and Business Venture, LLC; and TechSmart for Seniors, Inc., demonstrated expertise regarding specific elements of digital opportunity discussed in the Plan. These comments informed various changes to the Plan, including revisions to GTA's strategies and objectives as well as plans for collaboration and partner engagement. These comments also will be used to inform implementation of the Plan, even if in some cases they do not suggest any modifications to GTA's approach at this time.

Comments related to counties in need	In response to comments regarding how GTA should characterize and prioritize counties by digital connectivity need, GTA revised strategies in Section 2.3.1and measurable objectives in Section 2.3.2 related to these. GTA also added a link to an online dashboard showing county-based digital connectivity data. See Appendix C: County digital connectivity data.
Alternate strategies for ACP	Several entities, such as EducationSuperHighway and Clayton County, discussed the need for alternative methods of making the ACP more widely known to the average Georgia resident, through activities such as conducting outreach at K-12 schools and with trusted community institutions. These comments will help inform GTA's implementation of the Digital Connectivity Plan. See Section 5.1 for updated implementation activities regarding ACP outreach and enrollment.
Device ecosystem related comments	Many commenters, such as Compudopt, offered suggestions related to device adoption and affordability and the device ecosystem more broadly. See Section 2.3.2 for measurable objectives regarding digital connectivity and device ecosystems and Section 5.1 for implementation activities related to these.
Needs of people in rural areas	Various comments specifically drew attention towards the plight of rural Georgians and the barriers to connectivity that they face. Many of these comments addressed BEAD-related concerns. See Section 1.4 for BEAD and Digital Connectivity effort alignment, Section 2.3.2 for the measurable objective for broadband availability, and Section 5.1 for the implementation activity related to this. See also Appendix D for a covered population needs assessment and Appendix I for digital connectivity by covered population.
Digital literacy course(s) related comments	One of the most common suggestions that GTA received from its public comment process was for it to emphasize and facilitate digital literacy courses. GTA received these comments from numerous entities, such as AARP Georgia, GCSU, and members of the public, and they varied in scope: from suggestions such as the facilitation of basic computer courses and cybersecurity and telehealth training to the suggestion that caregivers of aging individuals also receive digital skills training. In addition, Bank On Georgia stressed the need for digital financial literacy as a key component in digital literacy training. See Section 2.3.2 for updates to strategies and measurable objectives regarding digital skills and

	Section 5.1 for updates to the implementation activities related the digital skills framework, guidebooks, digital navigators, data and evaluation, and other activities.
Overreliance upon ACP and strategies to accommodate the possibility of the end of the ACP	Several commenters, including representatives from Digitunity and Minority and Women's Business Venture LLC, raised concerns about the longevity of and overreliance on the ACP should funding for it cease. These comments influenced GTA's discussion regarding affordability concerns generally, but specifically, in Section 5.1where there is updated implementation information regarding the ACP.
Coordination with local government	Various commenters, including a representative from TechSmart for Seniors, Inc., and members of the public, urged GTA to interact further with units of local government and to encourage said units of local government to support their respective communities with digital connectivity efforts. See Section 4.1.3 for updated partnership strategies and Section 5.1 for related implementation activities.
Local outreach recommendations	Some comments suggested that GTA increase its local outreach efforts. These commenters, many of whom were members of the public, provided partnership recommendations, such as with local media and news organizations and trusted local institutions. These comments informed Section 5, which has updated implementation activities related to leveraging CAIs and other community organizations to support grassroots outreach.
Comments concerned about combatting misinformation	A few commenters raised concerns about the proliferation of misinformation and offered suggestions regarding how to increase media literacy. See Section 5 for updated implementation activities related to civic engagement, media, and information literacy.
Adjustments to the timeline	There were some comments, from entities such as GCSU and NAACP Georgia, requesting that GTA adjust its timeline. GTA took these comments into consideration and made appropriate adjustments to the timeline. See Section 5.2 for the updated timeline.
Barriers for covered populations	Several commenters, such as representatives from LFC Georgia and AARP Georgia, raised concerns about the circumstances and barriers to connectivity faced by different covered populations, in particular English learners and individuals with language challenges

	in the case of LFC Georgia and aging individuals in the case of AARP. LFC Georgia stressed the need for more detailed data and clearer metrics on objectives for English learners. In light of these types of comments, GTA has developed the covered population needs assessment in Appendix D and digital connectivity by covered population in Appendix I that address many of the concerns raised by these comments.

Appendix H: Digital Equity Act requirements

The following table displays this Plan's fulfilment of all requirements of the Digital Equity Act as outlined in the NOFO and other guidance from the NTIA.

Table 60. Requirements of Digital Equity Act corresponding to sections of this Plan

	Requirement	Details	Section
	Requirement 1		
1	Identification of digital equity barriers for each Covered Population	Individuals who live in covered households	3.2
		Aging individuals	3.2
		Incarcerated individuals	3.2
		Veterans	3.2
		Individuals with disabilities	3.2
		Individuals with a language barrier	3.2
		Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group	3.2
		Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.	3.2
	Requirement 2		
2a	**Measurable objectives** for documenting and promoting the **availability of, and affordability of access to, fixed and wireless broadband technology**	Individuals who live in covered households	2.3.2.1
		Aging individuals	2.3.2.1
		Incarcerated individuals	2.3.2.1
		Veterans	2.3.2.1
		Individuals with disabilities	2.3.2.1
		Individuals with a language barrier	2.3.2.1
		Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group	2.3.2.1
		Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.	2.3.2.1
2b	**Measurable objectives** for documenting and promoting the **online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services**	Individuals who live in covered households	2.3.2.3
		Aging individuals	2.3.2.3
		Incarcerated individuals	2.3.2.3
		Veterans	2.3.2.3
		Individuals with disabilities	2.3.2.3
		Individuals with a language barrier	2.3.2.3
		Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group	2.3.2.3
		Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.	2.3.2.3
2c	**Measurable objectives** for documenting and promoting **digital literacy**	Individuals who live in covered households	2.3.2.3
		Aging individuals	2.3.2.3
		Incarcerated individuals	2.3.2.3
		Veterans	2.3.2.3
		Individuals with disabilities	2.3.2.3
		Individuals with a language barrier	2.3.2.3

	Requirement	Details	Section
		Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group	2.3.2.3
		Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.	2.3.2.3
2d	**Measurable objectives** for documenting and promoting awareness of and use of, measures to secure **the online privacy of, and cybersecurity** with respect to an individual.	Individuals who live in covered households	2.3.2.3
		Aging individuals	2.3.2.3
		Incarcerated individuals	2.3.2.3
		Veterans	2.3.2.3
		Individuals with disabilities	2.3.2.3
		Individuals with a language barrier	2.3.2.3
		Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group	2.3.2.3
		Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.	2.3.2.3
2e	**Measurable objectives** for documenting and promoting **availability and affordability of consumer devices and technical support for those devices**	Individuals who live in covered households	2.3.2.2
		Aging individuals	2.3.2.2
		Incarcerated individuals	2.3.2.2
		Veterans	2.3.2.2
		Individuals with disabilities	2.3.2.2
		Individuals with a language barrier	2.3.2.2
		Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group	2.3.2.2
		Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.	2.3.2.2
	Measurable objectives are all:	Future focused	2.3.2
		Quantifiable	2.3.2
Requirement 3			
3	Assessment of how aforementioned measurable objectives interact with States's outcomes, including:	Economic and workforce development goals, plans, and outcomes	2.2 2.2.1
		Educational outcomes	2.2 2.2.2
		Health outcomes	2.2 2.2.3
		Civic and social engagement	2.2 2.2.4
		Delivery of other essential services	2.2 2.2.5
		All five items are mentioned for each covered population	
Requirement 4			
4	A description of how the State plans to **collaborate with key stakeholders** in the State, which may include:	Community anchor institutions	4.1.1 4.1.2 4.1.3 5.1.2

	Requirement	Details	Section
			5.1.4
		County and municipal governments	4.1.1
			4.1.2
			4.1.3
			5.1.5
		Local education agencies	4.1.1
			4.1.3
			5.1.1
			5.1.2
		Where applicable, Indian Tribes, Alaska Native entities, or Native Hawaiian organizations	
		Nonprofit organizations	4.1.1
			5.1.3
			5.1.5
		Organizations that represent:	
		Individuals with disabilities, including organizations that represent children with disabilities	4.1.1
		Aging individuals	4.1.1
			5.1.2
		Individuals with language barriers	4.1.1
		Veterans	4.1.1
		Individuals in Georgia who are incarcerated	4.1.1
			5.1.2
		Civil rights organizations	4.1.1
		Entities that carry out workforce development programs	4.1.1
			4.1.3
			5.1.1
		Agencies of the State that are responsible for administering or supervising adult education and literacy activities in the State	4.1.1
			4.1.2
			4.1.3
			5.1.1
		Public housing authorities in Georgia	4.1.1
		A partnership between any of the above entities	4.1.1
			4.1.2
			4.1.3
			5.1.2
			5.1.5
Requirement 5			
5	A list of organizations with which GTA collaborated in developing the Plan		Appendix B
Programmatic Requirements			
1	A stated **vision for digital equity**	Vision is stated and defines digital opportunity within Georgia	2.1.1

	Requirement	Details	Section
2	A digital equity **needs assessment**, including:	A comprehensive assessment of the baseline from which the State is working	3.2
		The State's identification of the barriers to digital equity faced generally	3.2
	The State's identification of **the barriers to digital equity** faced by:	Individuals who live in covered households	3.2.1
		Aging individuals	3.2.1
		Incarcerated individuals	3.2.1
		Veterans;	3.2.1
		Individuals with disabilities;	3.2.1
		Individuals with a language barrier	3.2.1
		Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group	3.2.1
		Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.	3.2.1
3	An **asset inventory**, including current resources, programs, and strategies that promote digital equity, whether publicly or privately funded, for:	Individuals who live in covered households	3.1.1 3.1.3
		Aging individuals	3.1.1
		Incarcerated individuals	3.1.1
		Veterans	3.1.1
		Individuals with disabilities	3.1.1
		Individuals with a language barrier	3.1.1 3.1.3
		Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group	3.1.1
		Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.	3.1.1 3.1.3
	An asset inventory including existing digital plans and programs already in place among municipal, regional, and Tribal governments		3.1.2
4	A **coordination and outreach strategy**, including opportunities for public comment by, collaboration with, and ongoing engagement with representatives of:	Individuals who live in covered households	4.1 4.1.1
		Aging individuals	4.1 4.1.1
		Incarcerated individuals	4.1 4.1.1
		Veterans	4.1 4.1.1
		Individuals with disabilities	4.1 4.1.1
		Individuals with a language barrier	4.1 4.1.1
		Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group	4.1 4.1.1
		Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area.	4.1 4.1.1

	Requirement	Details	Section
		The full range of stakeholders within the State	4.1 4.1.1 4.1.2 4.1.3
5	A description of how **municipal, regional, and/or Tribal digital equity plans** will be incorporated into the State Digital Equity Plan		3.1.2 3.1.3
6	An **implementation strategy** that:	Is holistic	5
		Addresses barriers to participation in the digital world, including affordability, devices, digital skills, technical support, and digital navigation	5.1.1 5.1.2 5.1.3 5.1.4
		Establishes measurable goals and objectives	5.1 2.1.2
		Establishes proposed core activities to address the needs of covered populations	5.1.1 5.1.2 5.1.3 5.1.4
		Sets out measures ensuring the plan's sustainability and effectiveness across State communities	5.1.5
		Adopts mechanisms to ensure that the plan is regularly evaluated and updated	5.1.5
7	An explanation of **how the implementation strategy addresses gaps** in existing state, local, and private efforts to address barriers		5.1 2.3
8	A description of how the State intends to accomplish the implementation strategy by **engaging or partnering** with:	Workforce agencies such as state workforce agencies and state/local workforce boards and workforce organizations	4.1.3
		Labor organizations and community-based organizations	4.1.3
		Institutions of higher learning, including but not limited to four-year colleges and universities, community colleges, education and training providers, and educational service agencies	4.1.3
9	A **timeline** for implementation of the plan		5.2
10	A description of how the State will **coordinate its use of State Digital Equity Capacity Grant funding** and its use of any funds it receives in connection with the BEAD Program, other federal or private digital equity funding		2.2 5.1.1

Appendix I: Digital connectivity by covered population

LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

A household, the income of which for the most recently completed year is not more than 150 percent of an amount equal to the poverty level, as determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census

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LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS
Demographics
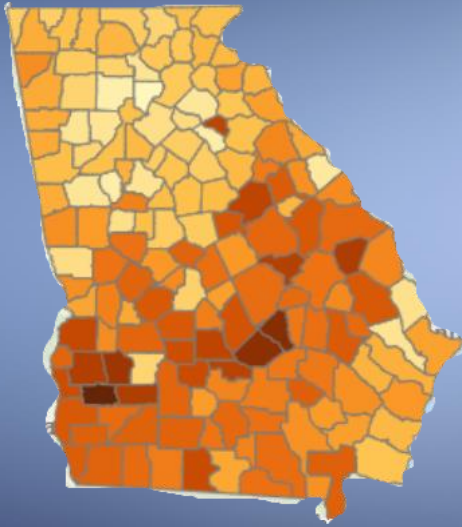
12.9% of the total population in Georgia lives in poverty.

Below Poverty Level	
Families with Children w/Income less than 150% below poverty	25.5%
Children Living In Poverty	17.2%
Men	11.4%
Women	13.8%
Black or African American	17.7
Asian	9.6%
American Indian	24%
Hispanic	16.6%
Less than High School Graduate	24%
With a disability	8.8%
Low Income Working Families	23%

Households receiving Food Stamps/SNAP	
With one or more people in the household 60 years and over	38.7%
With children under 18 years	52.7
Median Income	$31,424

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LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS
Counties & the Digital Divide

According to the US Census Bureau (2021), the median household income in Georgia is **$65,030**. Low-income individuals indicate need for digital skills and telemedicine training.

2022 All Ages Poverty Rate (Top 10 Counties)
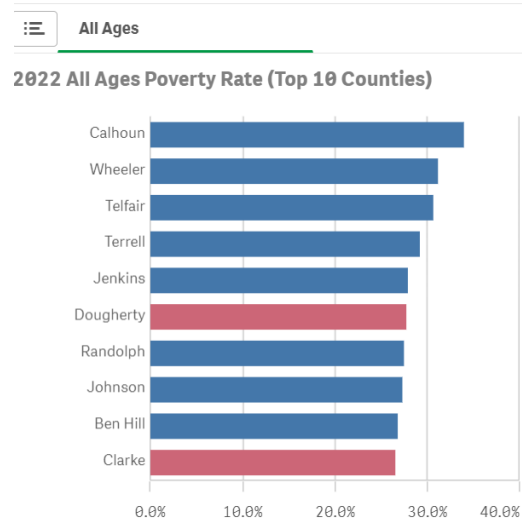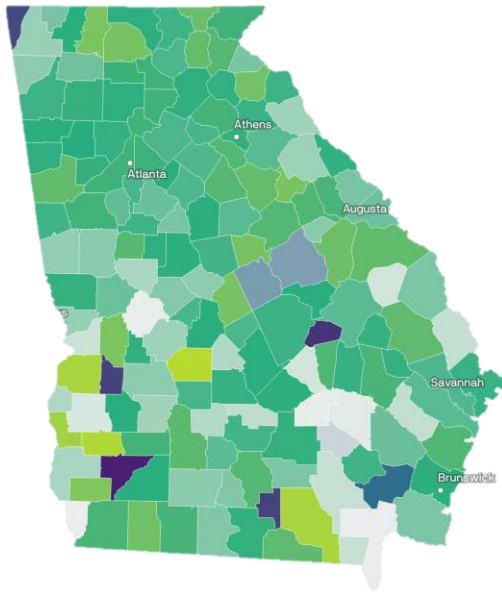
County	Broadband Availability (Unserved)	Low-Income Households	Digital Divide Score	Lacking computer	Poverty
Calhoun County	56%	46.30%	40.79	18.70%	26.10%
Wheeler County	36%	39.00%	50.36	43.80%	23%
Telfair County	26%	41.30%	48.39	33.10%	26.20%
Terrell County	24%	42.60%	39.51	18.60%	30.10%
Jenkins County	32%	48.40%	39.42	17.10%	27.90%

LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS
Challenges & Strategic Objectives

Barriers & Obstacles

- **Low-income individuals** display the most urgent needs for more affordable broadband
- **Low-income individuals** report needs for increased awareness of and confidence in protecting themselves from online security and privacy threats

77% of low-income households experience severe cost burdens.

Objectives

Our objectives to support Low-Income individuals include:	OBJ
Increase broadband access through low-cost broadband subscription options	1.A - C, 2.A
Provide access to a computing devices and computer labs	2.C- 2.E
Increase digital skills program enrollment and digital skills proficiency	3.C
Enable aging individuals to effectively use the internet if they so choose	3.D
Enhance digital health literacy in covered populations	3.F
Enhance opportunities in telecommunications, tech, and broadband industries	3.G

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LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS
Initiatives & Support
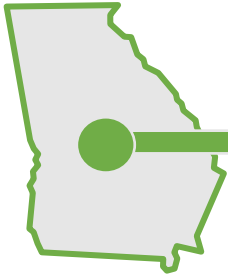
Implementation

- **Provide content and support for educational campaigns** among organizations that focus on ACP and low-cost ISP programs.
- **Work with partners to assist eligible households** in obtaining laptops, desktops, or tablets at a subsidized rate.
- **In partnership with Anchor Institutions** such as senior centers and libraries, make internet-enabled devices available to Individuals.
- **Harness technology** through webinars, kiosk info-stations, mobile health units, tailored apps, interactive websites, and virtual workshops to make critical information accessible.
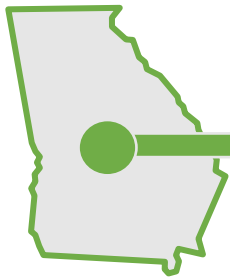
Support Network

Partner Organizations Supporting Digital Connectivity For low-income households

Georgia Department of Human Services

United Way · the Y YMCA · BankOn Georgia · Compudopt

GEORGIA PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE · inspiredu · MUST MINISTRIES · cyHarvestFoundation · DIGITUNITY DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY NETWORK

Goodwill of North Georgia · GEORGIA family connection PARTNERSHIP

LIFT ZONE FROM COMCAST · pin partnership for inclusive innovation · GCAA GEORGIA COMMUNITY ACTION ASSOCIATION · INTEGRITY TRANSFORMATIONS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION · TCSG Technical College System of Georgia · SELECT FULTON

N NORTHSTAR DIGITAL LITERACY

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Digital Connectivity for
AGING INDIVIDUALS

Any individual who is 60 years of age or older

AGING
Demographics

2.1M

# of AGING
individuals
50+
In Georgia

Age 50+ - 33%
Age 65+ - 15%
55.6% of Georgia's seniors are women
Ethnic and Racial Minorities – 47%
Median Income: $72,837
Life Expectancy: 77 years old
Income below poverty: 15%
Population with a disability: 13%
Over 75.5% of seniors receive social security
38.6% of seniors live alone

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AGING
Counties & the Digital Divide

The counties with the highest population of aging individuals are **Towns**, **Union**, **Fannin**, **Greene**, and **Quitman**. Quitman County has an aging individual population of **37.40%**. Additionally, **35.10%** of residents in Quitman County lack computer devices.
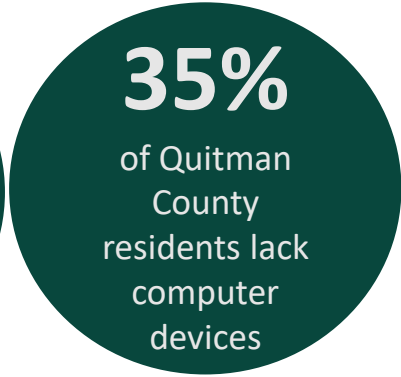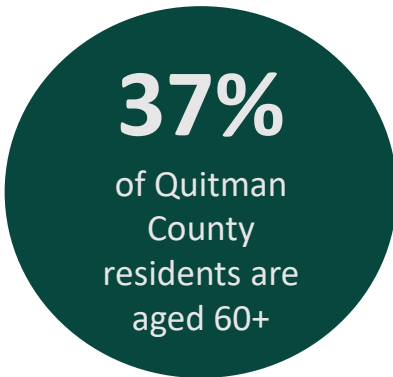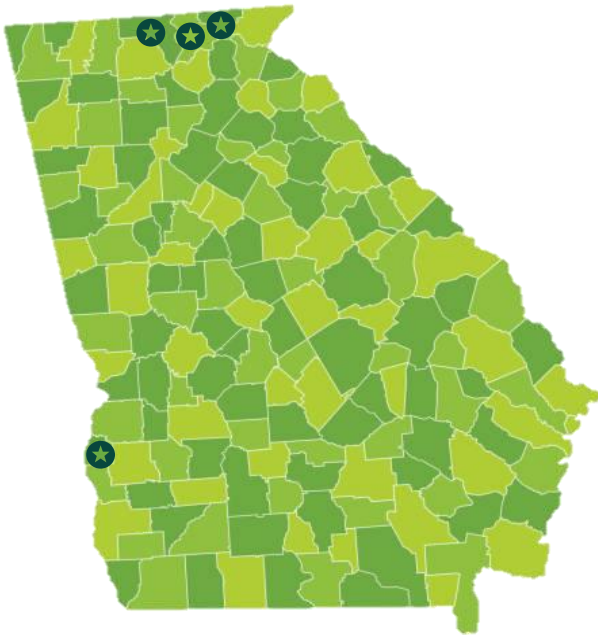
37%
of Quitman County residents are aged 60+

35%
of Quitman County residents lack computer devices

These statistics indicate significant barriers to accessing information and resources for a large portion of the population in Quitman County. The lack of computer devices can make it difficult for individuals to understand important information, such as health care instructions, job applications, and legal documents.

County	Broadband Availability (Unserved)	Aging Individuals (60+)	Digital Divide Score	Lacking computer	Poverty
Towns County	3%	41.40%	30.75	11.30%	14.20%
Union County	10%	41.10%	34.57	12.60%	14.90%
Fannin County	21%	38.20%	32.98	10.80%	11.6%
Greene County	8%	37.80%	30.62	13.70%	14.80%
Quitman County	50%	37.40%	58.42	35.10%	18.90%

AGING
Challenges & Strategic Objectives

Barriers & Obstacles

- **Aging individuals** indicate the most urgent need for digital skills and telemedicine training
- **Aging individuals** display a need for greater device adoption
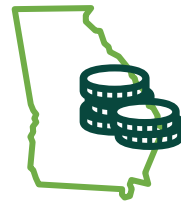
80.1% of residents have high-speed, competitively-priced service

Objectives

Our objectives to support aging individuals include:	OBJ
Increase broadband access through low-cost broadband subscription options	1.A - C, 2.A
Provide access to a computing devices and computer labs	2.C-2.E
Increase digital skills program enrollment and digital skills proficiency	3.C
Enable aging individuals to effectively use the internet if they so choose	3.D
Access information and training to learn how to protect their security & privacy	3.E
Enhance digital health literacy in covered populations	3.F
Train Digital Navigators specialized in assisting covered populations	4.C
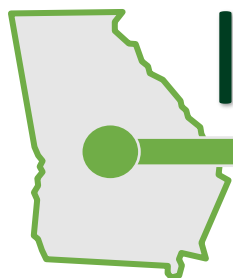
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AGING
Initiatives & Support

Implementation

- **Provide content and support for educational campaigns** among organizations that focus on ACP and low-cost ISP programs as well as for localities.
- **Establish a dedicated helpline and online support center** manned by tech volunteers and professionals.
- **Work with partners to assist eligible households** in obtaining laptops, desktops, or tablets at a subsidized rate through ACP, ensuring affordable access to essential devices.

Support Network

Partner Organizations Supporting Digital Connectivity For Aging Individuals

TechSmart — Learning for Seniors

AARP®

GCOA — GEORGIA COUNCIL ON AGING

ATLANTA HOUSING — LIVE · WORK · THRIVE

Macon Housing Authority — MAKING HOUSING AFFORDABLE

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT *of* HUMAN SERVICES — DIVISION *of* AGING SERVICES

OATS | OLDER ADULTS TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

BankOn Georgia

gta — Let's Connect Georgia

Digital Connectivity for
INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

Any justice impacted individual, currently incarcerated, or formerly incarcerated in a non-federal correctional facility

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Barriers & Obstacles

- **Incarcerated individuals** indicate the most urgent need for digital skills and telemedicine training
- **Incarcerated individuals** display a need for greater device adoption

Objectives

Our objectives to support Incarcerated individuals include:	OBJ
Increase broadband access through low-cost broadband subscription options	1.A - C, 2.A
Provide access to a computing devices and computer labs	2.C-2.E
Increase digital skills program enrollment and digital skills proficiency	3.C
Enable aging individuals to effectively use the internet if they so choose	3.D
Access information and training to learn how to protect their security & privacy	3.E

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INCARCERATED
Demographics

54K
Incarcerated individuals in Georgia

Populations	Rates (Per 100K)
Prison – 54,113	Incarceration - 507
Jail – 45,340	Violent Crime - 341
Parole – 19,256	Property Crime - 2376
Probation – 411,768	Probationers – 5,042
Prison Facilities - 34	Parolees - 236

Populations by Sex	Facilities
Males – 93.1%	Prison Facilities - 34
Females – 6.9%	Jail Facilities - 183

Populations By Race (Per 100K State Residents)
White - 314
Black/African American - 837
Hispanic - 186
Asian - 35

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INCARCERATED
Counties & the Digital Divide

According to Research (2022), the top five counties in Georgia with an incarcerated population are **Montgomery**, **Crisp**, **Ben Hill**, **Dooly**, and **Calhoun**. The high rate of incarceration in these counties can have a significant impact on the local communities such as increased poverty and reduced economic mobility.

2022 Home Counties by Incarceration Rate Per 100K Adults
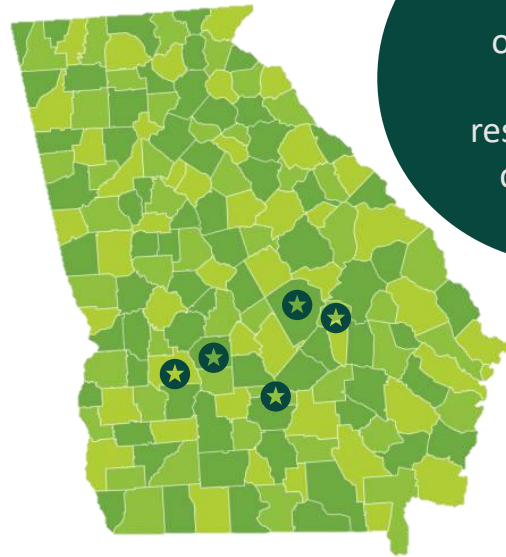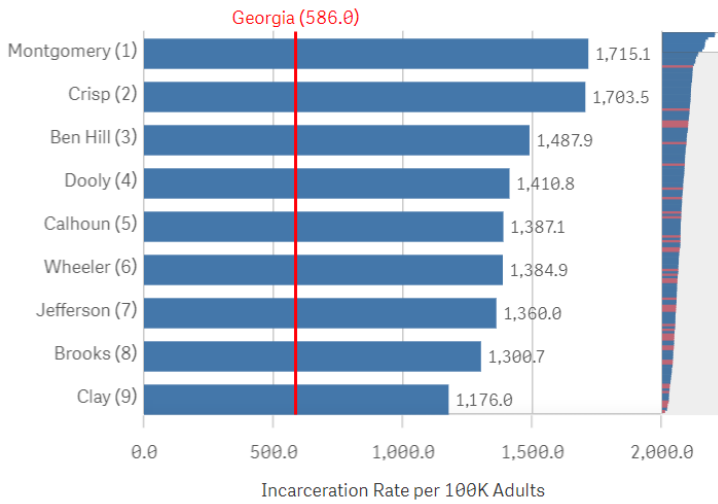
Georgia (586.0)

County	Incarceration Rate per 100K Adults
Montgomery (1)	1,715.1
Crisp (2)	1,703.5
Ben Hill (3)	1,487.9
Dooly (4)	1,410.8
Calhoun (5)	1,387.1
Wheeler (6)	1,384.9
Jefferson (7)	1,360.0
Brooks (8)	1,300.7
Clay (9)	1,176.0

18.7% of Calhoun County residents lack computer devices.

These statistics indicate significant barriers to accessing information and resources for a large portion of the covered population. Needs stated from community organization survey responses communicated the need for reliable internet and secure devices for justice-impacted individuals.

County	Broadband Availability (Unserved)	Incarcerated	Digital Divide Score	Lacking computer	Poverty
Montgomery County	7%	9.20%	29.77	9.10%	17%
Crisp County	19%	1.20%	37.31	15.10%	26.20%
Ben Hill County	8%	0.70%	32.4	12.70%	25.60%
Dooly County	8%	4.80%	42.66	20.60%	22.60%
Calhoun County	56%	29.10%	40.79	18.70%	26.10%

INCARCERATED
Initiatives & Support

Implementation

- **Provide device access** for the incarcerated population and justice-impacted individuals
- **Integrate digital skills curricula and assessments** into existing job training and job placement Services
- **Support essential health information access** for transient populations such as justice-impacted individuals

Support Network

Partner Organizations Supporting Digital Connectivity for incarcerated, formally incarcerated, or any justice impacted individual

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Digital Connectivity for
VETERANS

A person who served in the active military, naval, air, or space service, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable

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VETERANS
Demographics

651K

# of Veterans
In Georgia

Georgia is fortunate to boast the fifth largest military population in the country and over **101,000** military retirees currently live in the state.

Veteran Population		Percent Female		Unemployment Rate for Veterans		Below Poverty Level		Disability Rate	
Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
185,369	465,914	7.4	12.4	7.6	6.4	7.6	7.4	31.0	25.6

Median Personal Income		18 to 34 years		35 to 54 years		55 to 64 years		65 to 74 years		75 years and over	
Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
$34,335	$39,126	6.8	10.5	25.4	32.4	21.0	19.7	27.4	21.6	19.4	15.8

Less than High School Graduate		High School Graduate or Equivalent		Some College		Bachelor's Degree or Higher	
Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
8.7	5.3	34.3	25.9	34.4	37.9	22.5	30.8

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VETERANS
Counties & Digital Divide

An analysis of counties with the highest population of veterans in Georgia, highlighting the extent of the digital divide within these areas

As of 2022 the top five counties in Georgia with highest percentage of veterans are **Columbia**, **Chattahoochee**, **Houston**, **McIntosh**, and **Marion**. Marion County has a veteran population of **11.4%**. Additionally, **10%** of residents in Marion County have broadband availability (unserved).

Veteran Population Density
by FY2017 County

	3.84% - 5.70%
	5.70% - 6.57%
	6.57% - 7.26%
	7.26% - 8.29%
	8.29% - 23.05%

Top Five Counties

Columbia

Houston
Liberty
Marion
McIntosh
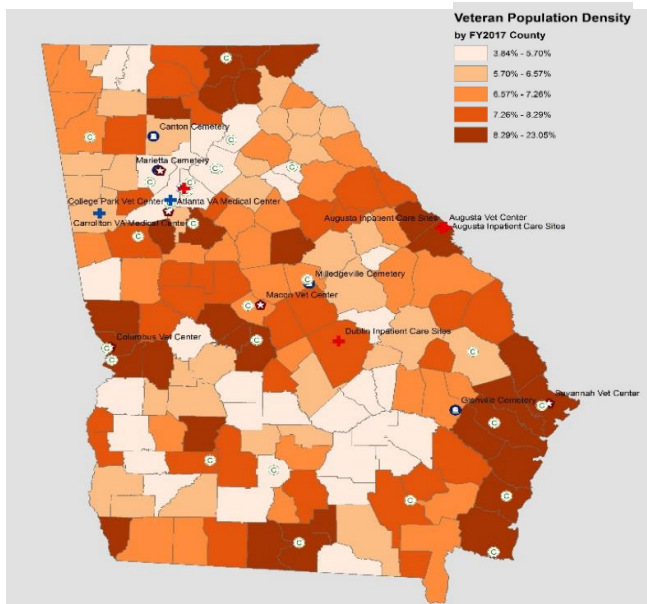
County	Vets	Broadband Availability (Unserved)	Digital Divide Score	Lacking computer	Poverty
Liberty County	14.60%	4.00%	16.4	5.30%	16.8
Columbia County	11.60%	2.00%	10.9	5%	6.90%
McIntosh County	11.60%	<1% Unserved	36.07	11%	19.70%
Marion County	11.40%	10.00%	41.11	21.50%	13.5
Houston County	11.30%	<1	14.31	5.70%	10.5

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VETERANS
Challenges & Strategic Objectives

Barriers & Obstacles

- **Veterans** lag non-veterans in internet adoption
- **Older veterans** need digital skills and telemedicine programming

7% of Georgia's veterans live in poverty

HUD estimates that approximately **664** Georgia veterans are homeless.

Objectives

Our objectives to support Veterans include:	OBJ
Increase broadband access through low-cost broadband subscription options	1.A - C, 2.A
Provide access to a computing devices and computer labs	2.C-2.E
Increase digital skills program enrollment and digital skills proficiency	3.C
Enable aging individuals to effectively use the internet if they so choose	3.D
Access information and training to learn how to protect their security & privacy	3.E
Enhance digital health literacy in covered populations	3.F
Enhance opportunities in telecom, tech, and broadband industries	3.G

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VETERANS
Initiatives & Support

Implementation

- **Support essential health information access** - digital navigation assistance to help veterans effectively manage their healthcare needs
- **Develop specialized Training for Digital Navigators** - focusing on the unique needs of veterans
- **Support technology certification programs** - upskill veterans in high-demand, emerging tech sectors.

Support Network

Partner Organizations Supporting Digital Connectivity For Veterans

Cobb County Public Library

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICE · STATE OF GEORGIA · 1776

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT of VETERANS SERVICE

GEORGIA PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE

LIFT ZONE FROM COMCAST

LITERACY ACTION

ATLANTA HOUSING LIVE · WORK · THRIVE

CTC COLUMBUS TECHNICAL COLLEGE

TCSG Technical College System of Georgia

Goodwill of North Georgia

ATLANTA TECHNICAL COLLEGE

CLAYTON COUNTY · GEORGIA LIBRARY SYSTEM Cc: Clayton connected

DODGE COUNTY Board of Commissioners

TAG-Ed Education Collaborative

PRL PIEDMONT REGIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEM BANKS | BARROW | JACKSON

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Digital Connectivity for

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Any individual living with a self-identified physical or mental disability

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES
Demographics

13.3
Percent of Georgia's Population with Disabilities

7.1%
Disabled Adults in Georgia are unemployed.
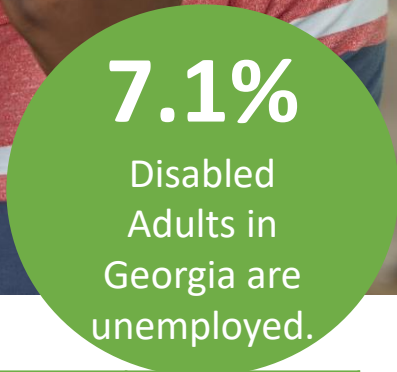
People with Disabilities	1,428,789
Men	13.1%
Women	13.6%
Black or African American	14.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	11.5 %
Asian	7.3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	14.1%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	8.1%

People with Disabilities	
With a hearing difficulty	3.4%
With a vision difficulty	2.6%
With a cognitive difficulty	5.7%
With an ambulatory difficulty	6.7%
Households receiving Food Stamps/SNAP	4,092,467
Employed	4,914,565
Unemployed	213,462

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INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES
Counties & The Digital Divide

Individuals with disabilities display a need for greater internet adoption. According to Research (2022), five counties in Georgia with a large population individuals with disabilities are **Towns**, **Union**, **Fannin**, **Quitman**, and **Calhoun**. Quitman County has a disability population of **20.20%**.
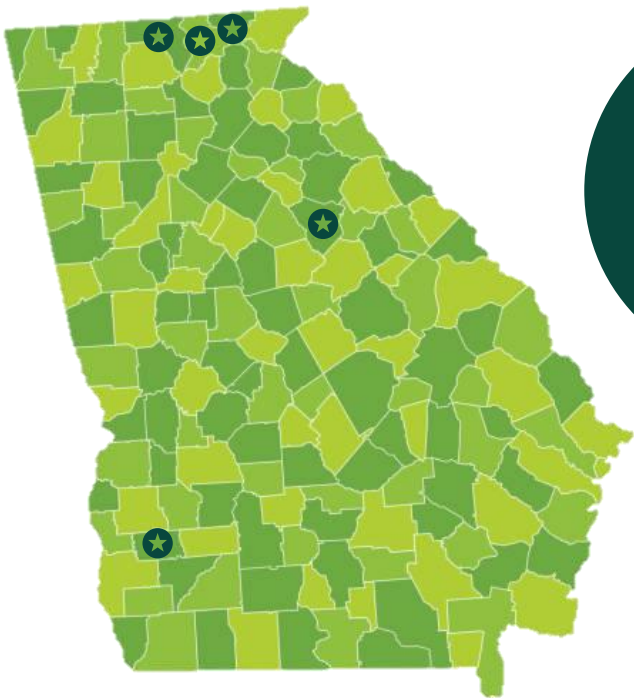
19.3%
of Calhoun County residents have a disability

35.1%
of Quitman County residents lack computer devices

These statistics indicate significant barriers to accessing information and resources for a large portion of the population in Quitman and Calhoun County.

County	Broadband Availability (Unserved)	Individuals with Disabilities	Digital Divide Score	Lacking computer	Poverty
Towns County	3%	18.40%	30.75	11.30%	14.20%
Union County	10%	18.80%	34.57	12.60%	14.90%
Fannin County	21%	25.40%	32.98	10.80%	11.6%
Quitman County	50%	20.20%	58.42	35.10%	18.90%
Calhoun County	56%	19.30%	40.79	18.70%	26.10%

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Barriers & Obstacles

- **Disabled individuals** living with disabilities indicate the most urgent need for digital skills and telemedicine training
- **Disabled individuals** display a need for greater device adoption

Objectives

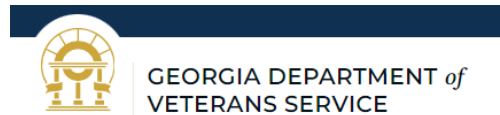| Our objectives to support individuals with disabilities include:	OBJ
Increase broadband access through low-cost broadband subscription options	1.A - C, 2.A
Provide access to a computing devices and computer labs	2.C-2.E
Increase digital skills program enrollment and digital skills proficiency	3.C
Enable aging individuals to effectively use the internet if they so choose	3.D
Access information and training to learn how to protect their security & privacy	3.E
Enhance digital health literacy in covered populations	3.F
Enhance opportunities in telecom, tech, and broadband industries	3.G

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INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES
Initiatives & Support

Implementation

- **Establish a dedicated helpline and online support center** manned by tech volunteers and professionals.
- **Provide funding for libraries and other CAIs** that offer ACP/low-cost program enrollment drives for eligible households.
- **Integrate digital financial literacy** into digital skills framework to address the growing importance of online financial management.
- **Establish community-driven peer-to-peer** digital skill-building opportunities

Support Network

Partner Organizations Supporting Digital Connectivity For Disabled individuals

GaDOE
Georgia Department of Education

Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities
D·B·H·D·D

MOREHOUSE
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

GEORGIA'S
Aging & Disability
RESOURCE CONNECTION

gls
Georgia Library Service for the blind and print disabled

GEORGIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

UCP
United Cerebral Palsy
of Georgia

GCDD
GEORGIA COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

GAO
GEORGIA ADVOCACY OFFICE

NORTHSTAR DIGITAL LITERACY

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INDIVIDUALS WITH LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Any individual that either reports an English language proficiency less than "very well" or with a literacy level beneath that of a grade 6 student. This includes English Learners and Low digital skills literacy individuals.

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ENGLISH LEARNERS
Demographics

6.3%
of all Georgia students are in ESOL.

19.8%
of children 18 and under have at least one foreign-born parent.

According to FY 2020, Georgia English Language Learners drastically decreased from FY 2017 (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). In Georgia, a notable demographic trend emerges when examining the parentage of children aged 18 and under. Specifically, **19.8%** of these children have at least one parent born outside the United States. This statistic underscores the multicultural fabric of Georgia's population, highlighting the significant contribution of immigrant communities to the state's demographic landscape.

Language spoke at home and ability to speak English	
Population 5 years and over	10,291,750
English only	85.1%
Language other than English	14.9%
Speak English less than "very well"	5.5%

Poverty Status by Language Spoken at home	
18 years and over:	937,255
Speak only English	788,582
Speak Spanish	89,423
Speak other Indo-European languages	21,360
Speak Asian and Pacific Island languages	24,636

English Learner individuals are less likely to be served by broadband and display needs for greater internet adoption.

Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 18 to 64 Years		
18 to 64 years:		Speak English "not well" or "not at all"
Speak Spanish:	580,958	160,787
Speak other Indo-European languages:	212,147	13,974
Speak Asian and Pacific Island languages:	210,023	39,027
Speak other languages:	103,310	6,868

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Individuals with Language Barriers
LOW LITERCY
Demographics

23.6%
Adults in Georgia have low literacy.

39%
4th Graders Below Basic Reading Level

Adult Literacy Rate and Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) Score	
Literacy Rate (%)	83.3
Literacy Rank	45
PIACC Literacy Average	260/500
PIACC Numeracy Average	243/500

s

Child Literacy Rates by State (4th Grade)	
Students Not Reading Proficiently (%)	66
Lower Income Students Not Reading Proficiently (%)	79

Educational Attainment

Population 18 to 24 years	1,074,228
Less than high school graduate	151,971
Population 25 years and over	7,332,980
Less than 9th grade	292,438
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	476,498

Poverty Rate for 25+ for whom Poverty status is determined by educational attainment level	
Less than high school graduate	24.0%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	14.0%
Some college or associate's degree	9.6%
Bachelor's degree or higher	4.5%
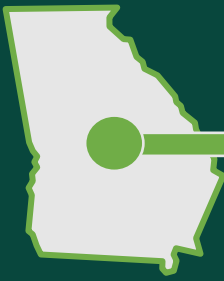
Counties & The Digital Divide

With a total estimated population of 6,042 people, **32.2%** of **Steward County's** population is estimated to be foreign born (Jones, 2020). **Clayton County** has a **9.10%** of English learner population. Additionally, With 78% of ELs speaking Spanish as their first language, it is followed by Arabic, Chinese, and Vietnamese (Owens, 2021). When considering policies or strategies to close the gap of the digital divide among individuals with language barriers, it's important to consider not just the first generation of immigrants, but also their children and future generations.
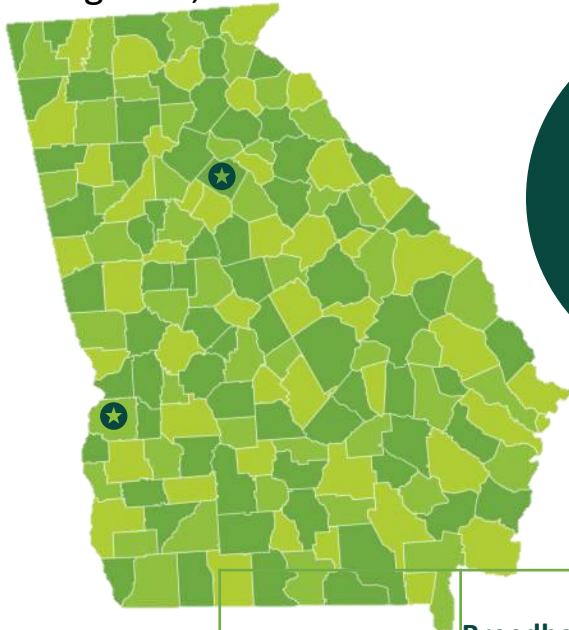
70%
of Stewart County residents are unserved for broadband.

17%
of Stewart County residents lack computer devices.

County	Broadband Availability (Unserved)	Individuals with Language Barriers	Digital Divide Score	Lacking computer	Poverty
Stewart County	70%	19.10%	45.65	17.70%	26.40%
Clayton County	1%	9.10%	13.45	5.70%	16.40%
Dekalb County	1%	8.70%	11.69	5.30%	13.50%
Bibb County	1%	2.00%	42.9	10.30%	51.10%
Richmond County	1%	1.90%	24.97	9.00%	2.10%

Barriers & Obstacles

- **Language barrier individuals** living with disabilities indicate the most urgent need for digital skills and telemedicine training
- **Language barrier individuals** display a need for greater device adoption

Objectives

Our objectives to support individuals with language barriers include:	OBJ
Increase broadband access through low-cost broadband subscription options	1.A - C, 2.A
Provide access to a computing devices and computer labs	2.C-2.E
Increase digital skills program enrollment and digital skills proficiency	3.C
Enable aging individuals to effectively use the internet if they so choose	3.D
Access information and training to learn how to protect their security & privacy	3.E
Enhance digital health literacy in covered populations	3.F
Enhance opportunities in telecom, tech, and broadband industries	3.G

Source: Georgia Median Household Income By Age - 2023 | Neilsberg
Source: https://www.incomebyzipcode.com/georgia

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INDIVIDUALS WITH LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Initiatives & Support

Implementation

- **Establish a dedicated helpline and online support center** manned by tech volunteers and professionals.
- **Provide funding for libraries and other CAIs** that offer ACP/low-cost program enrollment drives for eligible households.
- **Integrate digital financial literacy** into digital skills framework to address the growing importance of online financial management.
- **Establish community-driven peer-to-peer** digital skill-building opportunities

Support Network

Partner Organizations Supporting Digital Connectivity For Language Barrier individuals

LATINO COMMUNITY FUND GEORGIA — Collective Strength and Investment

ATLANTA TECHNICAL COLLEGE

GATESOL — GEORGIA TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

Goodwill of North Georgia

COABE — COALITION ON ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

NORTHSTAR DIGITAL LITERACY

GEORGIA PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE

LACC GEORGIA

GEORGIA PIEDMONT TECHNICAL COLLEGE

GaDOE — Georgia Department of Education

TCSG — Technical College System of Georgia

LITERACY ACTION

LIFT ZONE FROM COMCAST

GEORGIA GAE ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS

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Digital Connectivity for
RACIAL OR ETHNIC MINORITIES

Racial and ethnic minority group means American Indians (including Alaska Natives, Eskimos, and Aleuts); Asian Americans; Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders; Blacks; and Hispanics.

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RACIAL OR ETHNIC MINORITIES
Demographics

48.2%
Individuals in Georgia are racial or ethnic minorities

1.1 M
Immigrants reside in Georgia

Black or African American	3,384,201
American Indian and Alaska Native	55,227
Asian	485,027
Hispanic	1,132,604
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	7,411
Two or More Races	908,731
Other	476,365
Immigrant	1,168,022

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RACIAL OR ETHNIC MINORITIES
Counties & The Digital Divide

Education and training are necessary for the improvement of digital skills. Racial and ethnic minorities indicated need for increased awareness and confidence in protecting themselves from online security and privacy threats. Many counties in Georgia have high populations of racial and ethnic minorities.
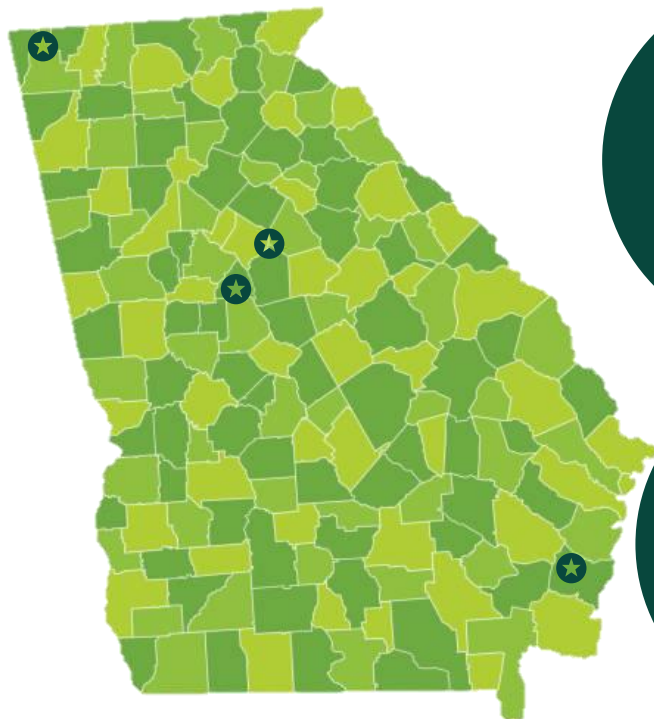
89.9% of Clayton County residents are racial & ethnic minorities

5.3% of Forsyth County residents live in poverty

10.6% of Whitfield County residents lack computer devices

4% of Liberty County residents are unserved for broadband

County	Broadband Availability (Unserved)	Ethnic and Racial Minorities	Digital Divide Score	Lacking computer	Poverty
Clayton County	1%	89.90%	13.45	5.70%	16.40%
Forsyth County	1%	28.30%	6.77	1.90%	5.30%
Whitfield County	0%	41.60%	23.7	10.60%	15.10%
Liberty County	4%	61.10%	16.4	5.30%	16.80%
Bibb County	1%	61.70%	42.9	10.30%	51.10%

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RACIAL OR ETHNIC MINORITIES

Challenges & Strategic Objectives

Barriers & Obstacles

- **Racial or Ethnic Minorities** Racial and ethnic minorities indicated need for telemedicine training
- **Racial or Ethnic Minorities** display a need for greater device adoption

Objectives

"Our city has one internet provider. The service is good and reliable."
- *Georgia Resident*

Our objectives to support racial ethnic & minorities include:	OBJ
Increase broadband access through low-cost broadband subscription options	1.A - C, 2.A
Provide access to a computing devices and computer labs	2.C-2.E
Increase digital skills program enrollment and digital skills proficiency	3.C
Enable aging individuals to effectively use the internet if they so choose	3.D
Access information and training to learn how to protect their security & privacy	3.E
Enhance digital health literacy in covered populations	3.F
Enhance opportunities in telecom, tech, and broadband industries	3.G

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Implementation

- **Establish a dedicated helpline and online support center** manned by tech volunteers and professionals.
- **Provide funding for libraries and other CAIs** that offer ACP/low-cost program enrollment drives for eligible households.
- **Integrate digital financial literacy** into digital skills framework to address the growing importance of online financial management.
- **Establish community-driven peer-to-peer** digital skill-building opportunities

Support Network

Partner Organizations Supporting Digital Connectivity For Racial Ethnic & Minority individuals

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Digital Connectivity for

RURAL RESIDENTS

Any individual living in a non-urban area; urban is defined according to the U.S. Census (based on the 2010 Decennial Survey) as urbanized areas, which contain 50,000 or more people, and urban clusters, which have at least 2,500 people but fewer than 50,000 residents

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RURAL RESIDENTS
Demographics

1.5M
Adults in Georgia live in rural counties.

Rural residents display a need for greater device adoption.

	Rural	Urban	Economic Region
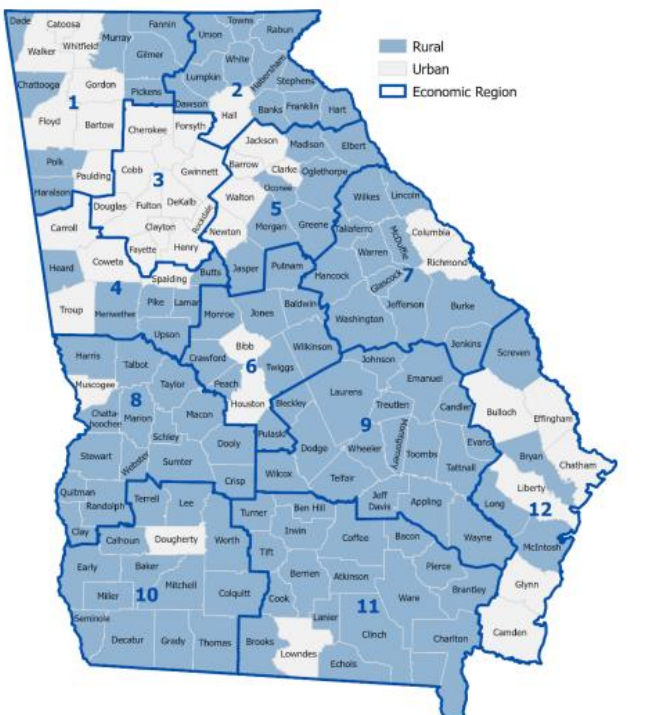
Rural Counties	120 / 159
Rural Counties	21% of Total Population
Rural GA's Over Age 65+	19%
Per capita Income	$42,273
Poverty	19.4%
Not Completed High School	17.3%
Unemployment	3.2%
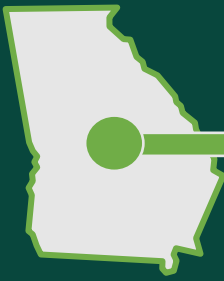
RURAL RESIDENTS
Counties & The Digital Divide

Rural residents need adequate access to broadband services. **Baker**, **Washington**, and **Taliaferro** counties have the high proportion of rural land and residency in Georgia. There is an urgent need in these rural areas for improved broadband access, enhanced digital literacy, and telemedicine training.
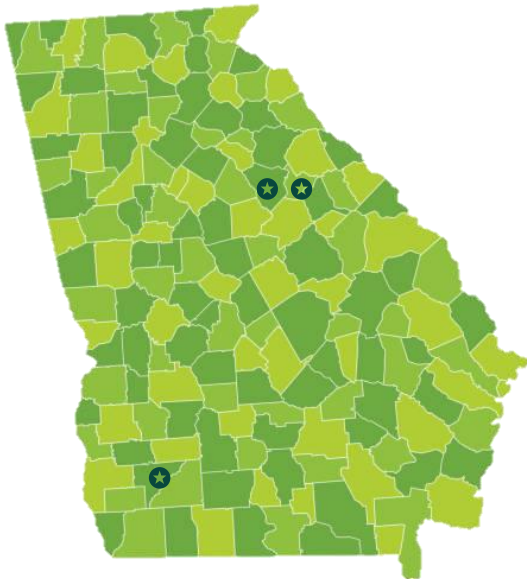
30%
of residents in Baker County lack a computer device

25%
residents of residents in Baker County live in poverty

Enhancing broadband access, boosting digital literacy, and providing telemedicine training are essential for the successful implementation of rural development programs, especially in sectors such as education, healthcare, and economic expansion.

County	Broadband Availability (Unserved)	Rural Residents	Digital Divide Score	Lacking computer	Poverty
Baker County	91.00%	100%	50.31	30.30%	25.10%
Washington County	19.00%	100.00%	33.92	16.80%	18.20%
Taliaferro County	2.00%	100.00%	48.72	26.00%	21.30%
Dade County	2.00%	88.60%	25.33	12.20%	9.80%
Douglas County	1%	15.80%	11.79	4.80%	12.20%

RURAL RESIDENTS
Challenges & Strategic Objectives

Barriers & Obstacles

- **Rural residents** living with disabilities indicate the most urgent need for digital skills and telemedicine training
- **Rural residents** display a need for greater device adoption

Objectives

Our objectives to support rural residents include:	OBJ
Increase broadband access through low-cost broadband subscription options	1.A - C, 2.A
Provide access to a computing devices and computer labs	2.C-2.E
Increase digital skills program enrollment and digital skills proficiency	3.C
Enable aging individuals to effectively use the internet if they so choose	3.D
Access information and training to learn how to protect their security & privacy	3.E
Enhance digital health literacy in covered populations	3.F
Enhance opportunities in telecom, tech, and broadband industries	3.G

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RURAL RESIDENTS
Initiatives & Support

Implementation

- **Establish a dedicated helpline and online support center** manned by tech volunteers and professionals.
- **Provide funding for libraries and other CAIs** that offer ACP/low-cost program enrollment drives for eligible households.
- **Integrate digital financial literacy** into digital skills framework to address the growing importance of online financial management.
- **Establish community-driven peer-to-peer** digital skill-building opportunities

Support Network

Partner Organizations Supporting Digital Connectivity For Rural residents

GDA
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

ABAC

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
EXTENSION
1785

pin partnership for inclusive innovation

GaDOE
Georgia Department of Education

SOUTHEASTERN
telehealth
RESOURCE CENTER

Graduation Alliance™

gcaa
GEORGIA COMMUNITY ACTION ASSOCIATION

N NORTHSTAR DIGITAL LITERACY

GEORGIA PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE

GEORGIA
family connection
PARTNERSHIP

LITERACY ACTION

GEORGIA
Rural Health
INNOVATION CENTER
AT MERCER UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

TCSG
Technical College System of Georgia

GEORGIA HISPANIC
CHAMBER of COMMERCE

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GEORGIA TECHNOLOGY AUTHORITY
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STATE TRIBES
Demographics

20K
American Indian and Alaska Natives in Georgia

Georgia's recognized state tribes are Georgia Tribe of Eastern Cherokee, Cherokee of Tribal Georgia Council, and Lower Muskogee Creek Tribe

State Tribe populations are less likely to be served by broadband due to the digital redlining of geographical areas and lack of infrastructure.

Source: https://data.census.gov/table/DECENNIALDHC2020.P9?g=040XX00US13

Source: https://georgiaindiancouncil.com/georgia_tribes

Source: https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.339

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STATE TRIBES
Counties & The Digital Divide

State Tribes need adequate access to broadband services. Lumpkin, Charlton, and Grady counties have a large proportion of state tribe residency and unserved broadband availability in Georgia. There is an urgent need in these rural areas for improved broadband access, enhanced digital literacy, and telemedicine training.

14.7%
of Grady County residents lack a computer device

21.3%
of Charlton County residents live in poverty

These statistics indicate significant barriers to accessing information and resources for State Tribes in Lumpkin, Charlton, and Grady Counties.

County	Broadband Availability (Unserved)	State Tribe	Digital Divide Score	Lacking computer	Poverty
Lumpkin County	10%	Georgia Tribe Of Eastern Cherokee	20.31	8.50%	**12.10%**
Charlton County	14%	Cherokee Of Georgia Tribal Council	35.11	13.80%	**21.30%**
Grady County	17%	Lower Muskogee Creek Tribe	35.99	14.70%	**17.50%**

STATE TRIBES
Barriers & Digital Equity Support

According to Korostelina and Barrett (2023), the demand for broadband access and high-speed Internet on Native American reservations is growing and there are several obstacles in the way of the deployment of broadband infrastructure.

> "Poverty, lack of digital literacy, and imbedded inequity unite to prevent members of the community our organization serves from accessing or using broadband internet services."
>
> *- Georgia Non-Profit & Resident*

Support Network

Partner Organizations Supporting Digital Connectivity For State Tribe individuals

PARTNERSHIP WITH NATIVE AMERICANS®

Reference: Korostelina, K. V., & Barrett, J. R. (2023). Bridging the digital divide for Native American tribes: Roadblocks to broadband and community resilience. *Policy & Internet*, *15*(3), 306–326. https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.339

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**Appendix J: "Broadband and Digital Equity Community Briefing,"
Student Freedom Initiative**

STUDENT
FREEDOM
INITIATIVE

HONORING THE PAST, GUIDING OUR FUTURE.

Broadband and Digital Equity Community Briefing

HBCU communities in the state of Georgia

December 2023

Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) Statewide Digital Connectivity Plan

SFI GA Public Comment Response Addendum

From: Student Freedom Initiative (SFI)
Date: December 2023

For review by the GTA: Please note that this document, the SFI GA Public Comment Response Addendum, includes (i) expanded view of ideas included in the public comment response submitted by SFI to the GTA online public comment portal, as well as (ii) additional details on facts and figures developed via the SFI community survey and engagement with HBCU communities via joint townhalls.

Context

As the world transitions to a more complete digital economy, it is more critical than ever for historically marginalized or under-resourced communities to gain access to funding opportunities to deploy affordable, high-speed internet, and ensure all residents have access to internet-enabled devices and possess the digital skills to productively use them.

In Georgia, aging individuals, low-income households, racial and ethnic minorities, and individuals with disabilities are of particular concern, and constitute populations highly represented in Georgia's HBCU communities. These dynamics sparked the Student Freedom Initiative's goal to ensure the needs of these communities are reflected in state plans for Digital Equity—namely, the communities of Georgia's 10 HBCUs—Albany State University, Fort Valley State University, Paine College, Savannah State University, Clark Atlanta University, Interdenominational Theological Center, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine, Morris Brown College, and Spelman College. To assess these needs, SFI analyzed 34 different digital equity metrics using publicly available sources of information and worked closely with Atlanta University Center (AUC) and Paine College to host joint town halls and gather survey responses from over 120 community stakeholders. The lived experiences of residents, businesses, local government, faith-based, and other organizations provided a qualitative layer to the quantitative data analyses.

Digital equity needs identified in HBCU communities

The communities of Georgia's HBCUs are facing outsized challenges in connectivity and affordability that impede participation in the digital economy and may contribute to deepening the existing digital divide.

Georgia's 10 HBCUs are surrounded by diverse communities with high concentrations of vulnerable populations—59 – 86% of individuals are part of a racial or ethnic minority, 52 – 83% of the population is Black, and 15 – 20% are living with a disability *(See Appendix B of the SFI GA Community Briefing).* Additionally, some HBCUs are located in highly rural parts of the

state—for example, the surrounding community of Fort Valley State University includes over 14,000 residents (100% of the surrounding community) living in rural areas.[1] These are some of the main criteria of individuals the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) has outlined as prioritized populations for digital connectivity efforts in the BEAD 5-Year Action Plan—Georgia's HBCUs can amplify the state's initiatives by serving as trusted Community Anchor Institutions for these target populations and work with state programs to address the following challenges:

1. **Residents face challenges in connectivity due to gaps in infrastructure and device access.** For example, in the surrounding communities of Albany State and Fort Valley State, ~50% and ~56% of households do not have a broadband subscription, up to ~25 percentage points (pp) higher than the average across the state *(See Appendix B of the SFI GA Community Briefing).* Though most Georgia HBCU communities are deemed well-served, there are still many unserved and underserved locations that have yet to receive federal funding—this number is as high as 100% in the AUC, Paine College, and Savannah State University's communities *(See Appendix B of the SFI GA Community Briefing).* Several organizations reported that current internet services do not meet organizational needs, with the primary challenges being slow or unreliable service, hampering community internet access (See Figure 1). At a town hall at the AUC, one participant highlighted difficulties attending Zoom calls or uploading pictures due to gaps in connectivity in the area, emphasizing the importance of addressing these service availability gaps through upcoming deployment efforts.

   In addition to broadband availability, device access levels are also subject to concern—the number of households with a desktop or laptop in the surrounding community of Albany State is up to 28% lower than the state average *(See Appendix B of the SFI GA Community Briefing).* 20% of survey respondents reported insufficient access to devices in their household with 45% reporting a lack of public computers available nearby (See Figure 2). Access to internet-compatible devices is a critical component to encourage digital literacy and participation in the digital economy.

Figure 1: Internet services meet organization's needs (# of respondents, N = 15 organizations)

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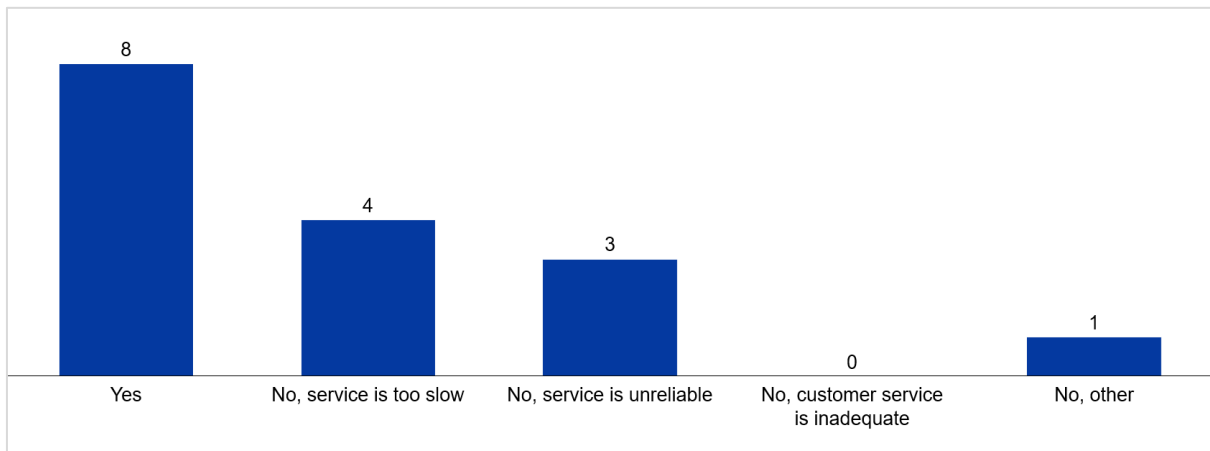
[1] Rurality is defined as non-metropolitan areas including populations <50,000, as defined by the Office of Management and Budget (https://www.hhs.gov/guidance/document/defining-rural-population)

Figure 2: Household device access (% of respondents, N = 92 individuals)
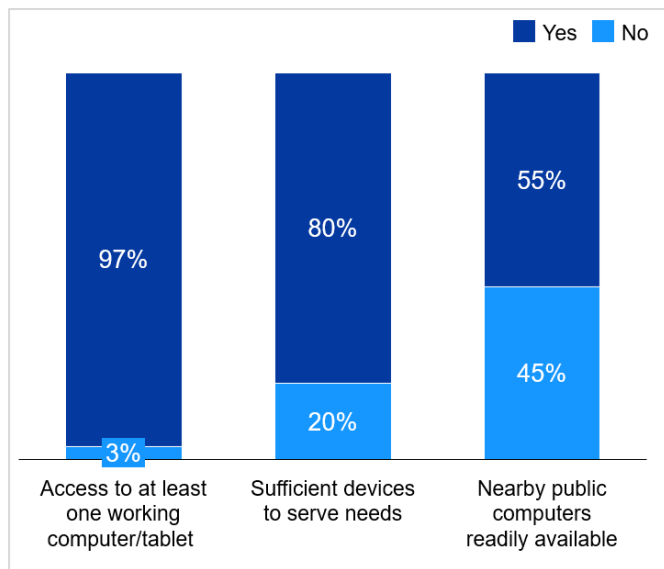
2. **Many households in the surrounding HBCU communities are likely to face affordability challenges.** 24 – 48% of families are living on less than 150% of the federal poverty level in the areas surrounding Georgia's HBCUs *(See Appendix B of the SFI GA Community Briefing).* In the surrounding communities of Albany State University and Paine College, up to 54% of households are ACP-eligible *(See Appendix B of the SFI GA Community Briefing).* For individuals without internet access, 50% of respondents reported their primary reason was affordability (See Figure 3). Of individuals and organizations with internet access, 51% of individuals and 83% of organizational respondents reported their current internet service is unaffordable (See Figure 4). 42% of respondents provided that a monthly price of <$30/month would be affordable, while many ISPs across the state list prices starting at $40/month or more (See Figure 5). 74% of survey respondents expressed interest in a digital inclusion program to assist with internet bill payments (See Figure 6).

Some areas also feature limited ISP competition, which may contribute to the lack of affordability of broadband services. Currently in the communities of Albany State and Fort Valley State, there are just 1 – 2 providers which offer fiber technology, which limits the subscription options for residents in those areas *(See Appendix B of the SFI GA Community Briefing).* To address this issue, GTA could develop programs and funding vehicles specifically to foster increased market competition through an Open Access Conduit Network (as illustrated by the city of West Des Moines, Iowa)[2]. A city-wide open access conduit system will promote increased competition and provide a revenue stream to municipalities, similar to rights-of-ways and utility access.

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[2] https://ilsr.org/open-access-conduit-des-moines-fiber

Figure 3: *Why individuals do not have internet (# of respondents, N = 8 individuals)*

Reason	Count
Too expensive	4
Unreliable service	3
No internet available	2
I use my cell phone plan	2
Other	1
I don't have a device	0
I don't want internet access	0
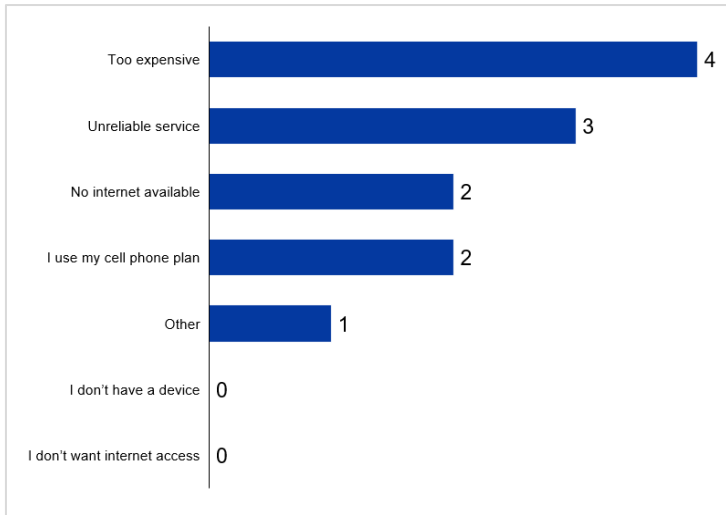
Figure 4: *Internet service is affordable (% of respondents, N = 95 individuals, 12 organizations)*

Legend: Yes, No

	Yes	No
Individuals	49%	51%
Organizations	17%	83%
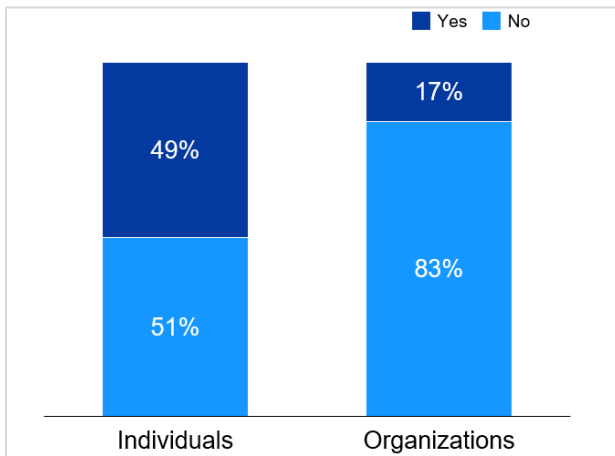
Figure 5: *Affordable monthly price for internet (# (%) of respondents, N = 50 individuals)*

Monthly price

Monthly price	# (%)
$0 to $30 a month	21 (42%)
$31 to $50 a month	18 (36%)
$51 to $75 a month	5 (10%)
Over $75 a month	6 (12%)
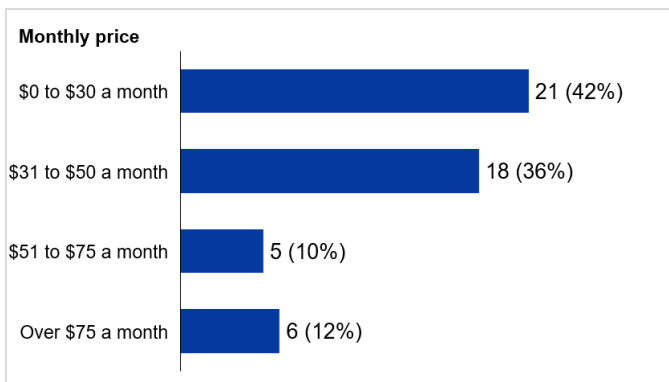
Figure 6: *Broadband and digital inclusion programs of interest (# (%) of respondents, N = 92 individuals)*

68 (74%)	50 (54%)	41 (45%)	41 (45%)	39 (42%)	38 (41%)	34 (37%)	31 (34%)	29 (32%)	4 (4%)
Pays for all/part of my internet bill	Public/free Wi-Fi hotspots	Assistance applying for programs that pay my internet bill	Free tech support in public spaces	Network/teach other people digital skills	Workforce development programs	More computers available to use for for free in public spaces	Access to 1:1 help on tech topics	Rental, refurbished, or discounted priced devices	Other[1]

1. Other programs or services individual respondents would be interested in include assistance with switching between ISPs, a program that will enable low-income families to purchase laptops at a discount price, and allowance through ACP to provide children with phone lines

3. **Populations in the surrounding communities of HBCUs could be a priority for digital literacy outreach efforts.** In the BEAD 5-Year Action Plan, GTA reported that people of color are underrepresented in employment with high levels of "digitalization" and that there is a need for digital training and resources for populations aged 65+. These initiatives are particularly pertinent in the communities surrounding HBCUs, which are constituted of racial and ethnic underrepresented populations, aging individuals, and those living with disabilities. GTA may consider incorporating the results of several recent studies on effective methods and approaches to offer deep, immersive government-funded digital literacy training programs within senior living centers and retirement communities. For example, the Stanford Center on Longevity highlighted library laptop checkout programs to enable older adults being able to reinforce new skills on their own tablets or laptops at home[3]. Researchers from the Universities of British Columbia and Toronto also created a conceptual framework for implementing technology literacy programs in retirement homes and residential care facilities[4].

Additionally, in the communities surrounding Albany State, the population of individuals 25+ without a high school degree is up to double that of the state, demonstrating the opportunity for growth in digital skills and learning through workforce development programs *(See Appendix B of the SFI GA Community Briefing).* Survey respondents highlighted low confidence across several digital skills—41% of respondents reported they were somewhat or not confident in scheduling telemedicine appointments and 28% reported similar low confidence in making digital financial transactions (See Figure 7). 67% of organizations reported only partial or lack of confidence by community members in understanding and communicating digital information and 91% reported partial or lack of confidence in community members protecting their information online (See Figure 8). At a town hall in the AUC, a computer science professor highlighted the danger

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[3] https://longevity.stanford.edu/older-adults-and-technology-moving-beyond-the-stereotypes/

[4] https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35984689/

associated with expanding community access to technology without offering training on safe technology use, emphasizing the need to integrate strategy for digital literacy and safety alongside accessibility. Proficiency in digital skills and online safety is critical to encourage participation in the digital economy and improved health outcomes.

Figure 7: *Level of confidence in digital skills (% of respondents, N = 92 individuals)*
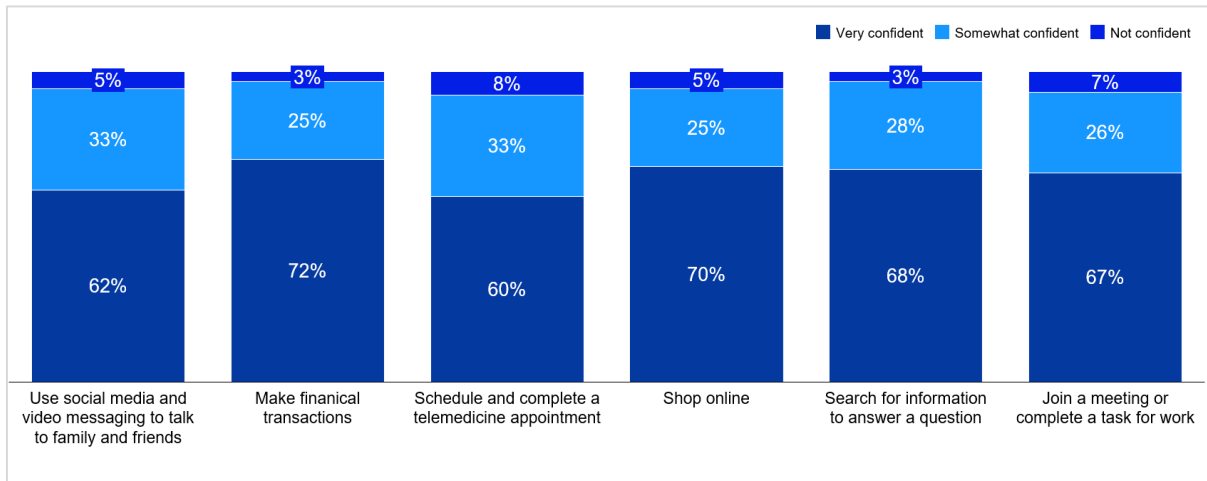
Figure 8: *Perceived digital literacy skills of community members (% of respondents, N = 12 organizations)*
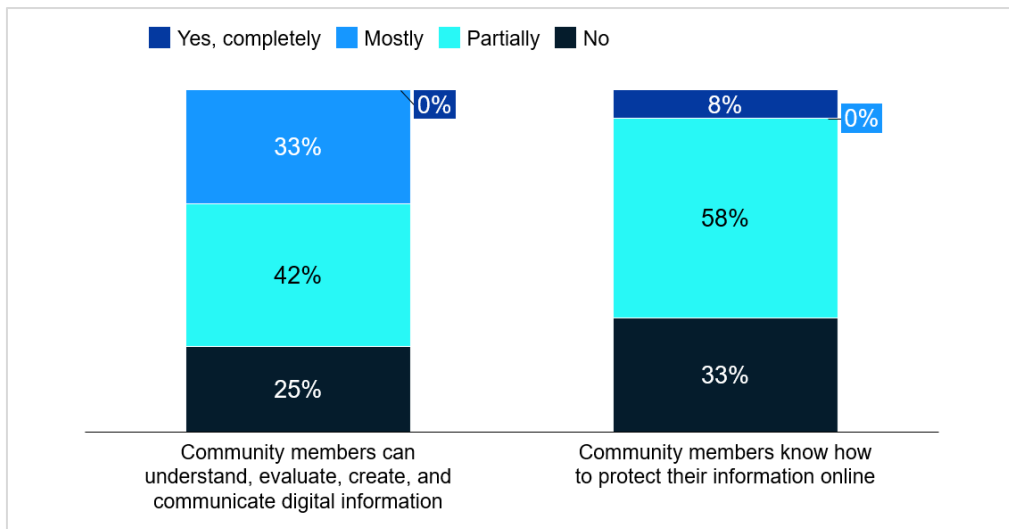
It's key to address the challenges faced by communities surrounding Georgia's HBCUs across these three areas to encourage digital equity and equal participation in the digital economic opportunities. The significant differences in broadband adoption and access in these communities compared with the state overall is an indicator of a deepening digital divide and a call-to-action to ensure no community is left behind in an era of increasing digitization.

What this means for Georgia's Digital Equity Plan

We appreciate the effort taken to assess needs across the state and develop goals and strategies to effectively address those needs. The state's 5-Year Action Plan addresses many of the needs of these HBCU communities—in particular, strategies related to Objective 4 to reduce obstacles to digital connectivity and encourage equity. For example, Georgia Department of Education's Office of Rural Education and Innovation is dedicated to increasing broadband access and adoption to rural areas which lack adequate access to broadband, technology, and devices.

Given the identified needs, we have 6 recommendations to better address the unique challenges and opportunities in HBCU communities, which will likely be applicable to populations across the state:

1. **Tailor state's objectives and associated key performance indicators (KPIs) to challenges disproportionately faced by state's covered populations.** Covered populations face heightened challenges to broadband access and digital equity. To effectively achieve the state's overarching goals, it could be important to set clear KPIs focused on these populations and effectively focus strategies on the populations that are disproportionately impacted by these challenges. For example, SFI's analysis of the US Census's Public Use Microdata Sample reveals that racial/ethnic minorities, veterans, aging individuals (those above 60 years of age), individuals that speak another language, and individuals with a disability are less likely to own a desktop/laptop computer. In the surrounding community of the AUC, for example, 46 – 67% of these covered populations own desktops or laptops compared to state averages of 67% – 82% *(See Appendix B of the SFI GA Community Briefing).* Device programs focused on those communities could have a greater impact on the state's overall targets.

2. **Prioritize funding to take into account target outcome disparities in predominantly Black and rural communities.** We appreciate the acknowledgement in Georgia's BEAD 5-Year Action Plan that there is currently a lack of Digital Equity programs to address connectivity for rural areas and Community Anchor Institutions, which particularly affects broadband access for individuals with disabilities and aging individuals. In discussions with ISPs, competitive local exchange carriers (CLECs), and telecom or utility construction companies across the nation, many have voiced a concern regarding the difficulty in getting right-of-way permit attachments applications approved due to the lack of experienced telecom permit coordinators at the local, county, or state levels. This is an area where the Georgia Technology Authority can make an immediate impact by allocating funding to HBCUs and 2-year community colleges to develop telecommunications permit coordinator certification programs and 2-year certifications for the construction industry (e.g., for line and vault work). This will serve to decrease permit review and approval timelines that slow down the fiber network deployment efforts. By directing funding towards programs targeted towards community anchor institutions, GTA can direct investment dollars to areas where there is greatest disparity in outcomes (e.g., gaps in digital skills & job training programs in rural areas) and opportunity to increase community support for GTA digital equity planning efforts.

3. **Consider deepening partnerships with HBCUs in the state.** GTA may consider developing deeper relationships and partnerships with each HBCU in order to implement strategies and objectives targeted towards covered populations, which may be highly represented in the surrounding communities of HBCUs. GTA has already noted partnerships with several education institutions, such as Albany State, Atlanta Technical College, Fort Valley State University, and Morehouse School of Medicine. HBCUs in particular may be able to help advance GTA's outlined digital equity objectives, given their central role in their surrounding communities. For example, at a town hall at the AUC, representatives of community organizations emphasized the strong connections between their organizations and the surrounding community, and their interest in working with the local government to help identify and address gaps in connectivity. HBCUs and community organizations are positioned well to expand opportunities for public device access, disseminate information about state and local government programs, and offer opportunities for civic and social engagement for covered populations.

4. **Articulate workforce development as a priority to better enable career mobility for the state's disproportionately impacted communities.** We appreciate the need highlighted in Georgia's BEAD 5-Year Action Plan for rural workforce development and digital training and resources for prioritized communities, especially for aging individuals and individuals with disabilities. We encourage GTA to name workforce development as a priority in digital equity initiatives. As recognized, digital training opportunities have potential to support upskilling and reskilling of Georgia's workforce, particularly in rural areas, and encourage overall economic development goals for the state. The state's 10 HBCUs would be strong partners in this effort in order to provide resources and training for digital skill development.

5. **Consider adopting a series of state-funded high-technology workforce development programs to address the additional workers needed per year to build infrastructure.** As highlighted by the US GAO in a 2022 study[5], thousands of additional workers would be needed to build infrastructure defined by the result of funding released by 8 recent broadband programs[6], depending on the pace at which these programs provide funding. Given the demand for additional workers, targeted funding programs through public-private partnerships could support a robust, targeted digital literacy and workforce development program offering training in areas such as cybersecurity, technical support, and software engineering (Arkansas has developed a similar initiative, Arkansas Fiber Academy)[7].

6. **Consider replicating a series of state-funded digital literacy upskilling programs targeted towards incarcerated and previously incarcerated individuals.** Many correctional educational programs in the country may offer incarcerated individuals

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[5] Telecommunications Workforce: Additional Workers Will Be Needed to Deploy Broadband, but Concerns Exist About Availability, U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2022 (https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-23-105626.pdf)

[6] The 8 programs include Broadband Equity and Access Deployment Program, Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, Capital Projects Fund, Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, ReConnect Program, Enabling Middle Mile Grants Program, Broadband Infrastructure Program, Rural Broadband Program

[7] https://www.arkansascc.org/arkansasfiberacademy

limited to no access to the internet[8]. Digital training programs for incarcerated and previously incarcerated individuals can empower economic outcomes by targeting skills relevant to employment and facilitating social reintegration. GTA can consider creating a program such as EXODUS, which offers support to individuals transitioning from incarceration in New York, targeted towards both the current incarcerated and previously released parolees within the Georgia State Department of Corrections and local city/county jails. Consideration to offer early release or reduced sentences may serve as incentives for those who choose to enroll in these programs.

Ideas and initiatives to support Georgia's Digital Equity efforts

SFI has also engaged with HBCUs across Georgia and compiled several ideas and initiatives that resonated with leaders and members of these communities. We commend GTA for recognizing the partner organizations engaged in broadband deployment and digital connectivity (equity) efforts and hope the following ideas may be leveraged as a basis for future collaboration.

A. **Increase opportunities for affordable device use and access in public spaces through community organizations (e.g., device loans from libraries).** As identified in the needs of HBCU communities, many households face barriers to accessing internet-compatible devices. Approximately 51 – 75% of households across HBCU communities have access to a desktop or laptop compared to the state average of 79% *(See Appendix B of the SFI GA Community Briefing).* 32% of individuals indicated interest in rental, refurbished, or discounted priced devices, which could be supported by community initiatives. GTA can work with schools, local governments, and community organizations to offer households more affordable access to internet-compatible devices.

Further, 45% of individuals believe there are no nearby public computers readily available. These individuals would greatly benefit from initiatives to offer greater opportunities for device access in public spaces—37% of individuals indicated interest in expanded programs for device access in public spaces. HBCUs could partner with the state to play a key role in expanding device access for communities in need by creating "device libraries" where students and community members can borrow laptops, tablets, and other internet-compatible devices. HBCUs can also conduct outreach and awareness campaigns within the community to ensure residents are aware of available device access programs and resources.

B. *Encourage enrollment in low-cost internet service programs through community outreach.* Most households in Georgia's HBCU communities are likely to be facing affordability challenges, with 26 – 48% of households living on less than 150% of the federal poverty level and 39 – 54% eligible for ACP *(See Appendix B of the SFI GA Community Briefing).* Although ACP uptake is strong overall (ranging from 43 – 80%), survey respondents reported primary reasons for lack of participation as lack of awareness of or uncertainty regarding the sign-up process *(See Appendix B of the SFI GA Community Briefing* and Figure 9). HBCUs and other community organizations can

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[8] https://nycitylens.com/people-leaving-prison-adapting-modern-technology-daily-challenge/

play a critical role in bridging the gap in awareness for these households. Community organizations can host community engagement events and leading awareness campaigns to ensure eligible households are equipped with information about low-cost internet programs.

Figure 9: *Reasons for lack of ACP participation (# (%) of respondents, N = 51 individuals)*
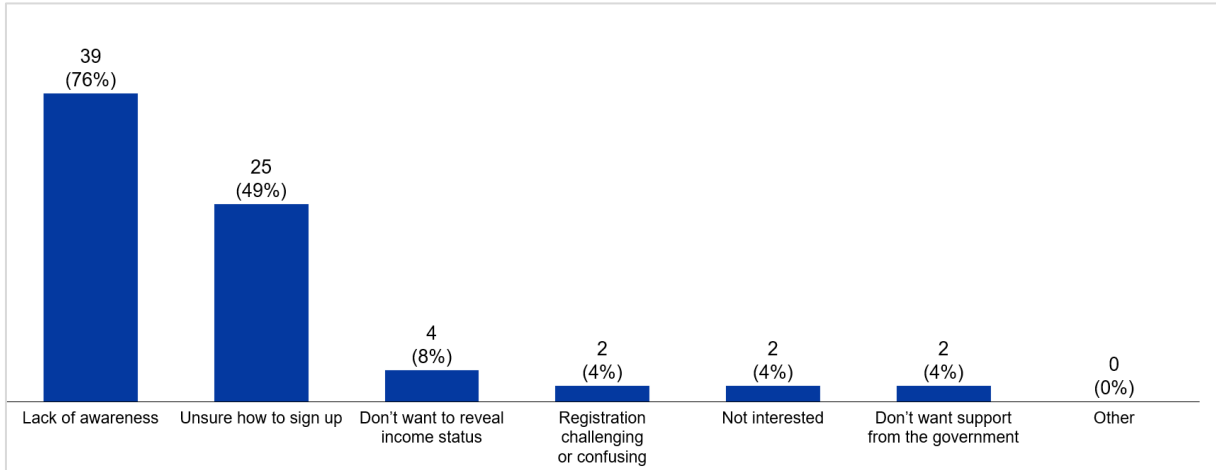
C. **Develop a training curriculum on digital literacy by engaging a broader group of stakeholders.** We commend GTA for recognizing that educational institutions are well-positioned to be partners in expanding workforce development and internet access for students. HBCUs are particularly well-suited to addressing challenges related to digital literacy due to their proximity to covered populations in surrounding communities. HBCUs can serve as partners in planning and enhancing educational programs targeted towards internet safety, digital literacy, and workforce development. GTA has shared ongoing partnerships and engagement with several Georgia HBCUs, including the Albany State University, Fort Valley State University, Paine College, Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College, and Morehouse School of Medicine. GTA can expand on engagement with these HBCUs as well as those not currently included in stakeholder outreach (e.g., Savannah State University, Interdenominational Theological Center, Morris Brown College, and Spelman College). GTA can also directly name the specific HBCUs that will be involved in the effort to expand digital skills credentialing and advanced IT certifications.

These HBCUs can help implement digital literacy initiatives for prioritized populations. Up to 24% of HBCU community populations include individuals 25+ without a high school degree is up to double that of the state, demonstrating the opportunity for growth in digital skills and learning through workforce development programs *(See Appendix B of the SFI GA Community Briefing).* Respondents also reported low to medium confidence in digital skills for social media and video messaging, financial transactions, and telemedicine appointments. HBCUs can help address this gap by serving as digital literacy centers to offer training support for the local community on computer skills, internet usage, and digital safety and compile resources that can be more widely distributed. For example, North Carolina worked with NC State University to develop a training curriculum and digital inclusion plan for community leaders to be implemented

across counties.[9] Further, organizational respondents highlighted interest in facilitating digital literacy support and training programs (e.g., managing telehealth appointments, cybersecurity) if funding were available (See Figure 10). Potential programs like these exemplify how higher education institutions can serve as implementation partners to support education and training programs related to digital upskilling.

Figure 10: Programs and services of interest if funding were available (# of respondents, N = 15 organizations)
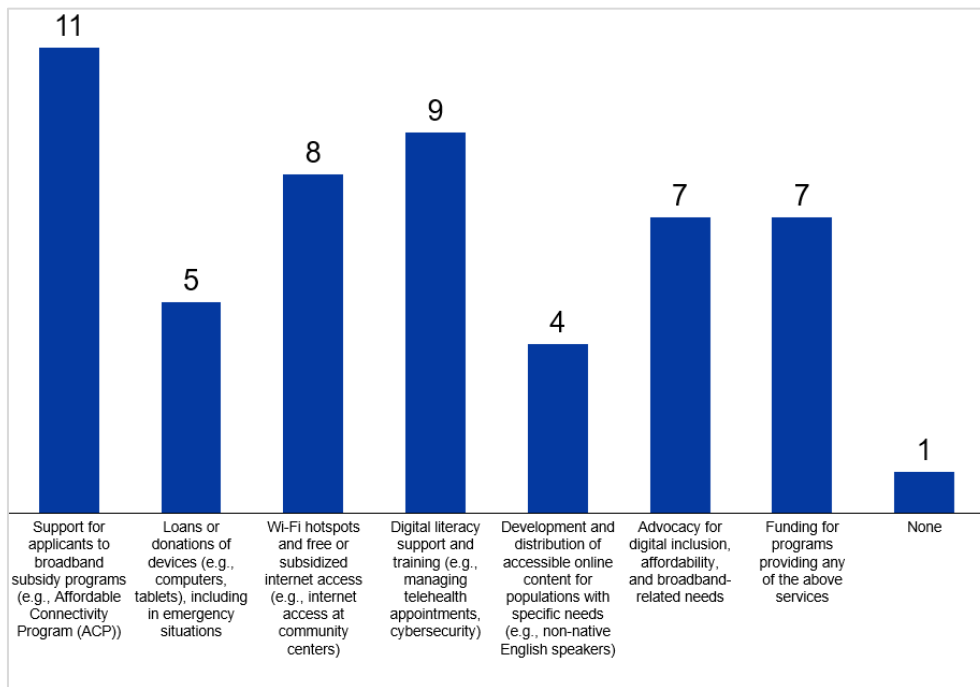
D. **Assemble a task force for digital inclusion in local communities including HBCU representatives, community leaders, and technology experts to ensure continuous improvement of digital inclusion efforts.** One of the considerations recognized in SFI's community engagement efforts is the longevity of digital inclusion initiatives. SFI heard in town halls and responses from HBCUs about the need to create programs that are sustainable beyond the 5-year funding period and can support the trajectory of digital equity efforts in the long term. For example, one town hall participant suggested partnering with communities in broadband deserts, local governments, and service providers to leverage tax dollars or incentives to help sustain accessibility or affordability programs in the long term. The Georgia State Legislature could consider adding line-item funding specifically targeted to aforementioned programs. In order to encourage the sustainability of initiatives, the state can also partner with local communities to convene task forces constituted of community stakeholders to track progress of initiatives and gauge community impact in real-time. These task forces can support data collection, community engagement, educational initiatives, and public-private partnerships related to digital inclusion efforts and continuously monitor the effectiveness of ongoing efforts.

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[9] https://iei.ncsu.edu/band-nc/

E. **Collaborate with local healthcare providers and community organizations to offer telehealth support and improve disparities in healthcare outcomes.** We commend GTA for recognizing the disparities faced by Georgia's rural communities in access to care and healthcare outcomes. Up to 41% of respondents reported being not confident or only somewhat confident in digital skills for telehealth (e.g., scheduling telehealth appointments). HBCUs can help encourage greater access to telehealth services for communities in need by hosting workshops and training programs to educate community members about the benefits and usage of telehealth services (e.g., how to schedule appointments, use telehealth apps and IoT sensor-based self-testing medical devices, and access medical resources online). HBCUs (especially those that offer programs in nursing and medical professions) could also work with the state to provide "telehealth access centers" within their communities, where residents can conduct virtual healthcare appointments with doctors and specialists even if they lack access to a reliable internet connection or a suitable device at home. Local healthcare providers and medical facilities can be partners in this effort to extend telehealth services to underserved areas and help connect patients with healthcare professionals remotely.

Appendix A

Synthesis of insights from Georgia survey respondents

Key takeaway	Initial insights
Lack of internet access threatens individuals' ability to access critical services—in Georgia, education, personal finance, and employment services are particularly important for survey respondents	• **81%** of state respondents are using the internet to access education services, **66%** use the internet for personal finance services, and **56%** for employment services
While most respondents have internet access at home, cost prevents the remainder from getting internet subscriptions. Some respondents report being unsatisfied with their internet due to cost, internet speed, and unreliable service	• **93%** of Georgia state respondents have internet access • For those without internet access, the main reason is high cost **(50%)** • **47%** of individuals are satisfied or completely satisfied with their current internet • **75%** of responding organizations stated affordability as one of the biggest barriers to device access in their community
Affordability is a noticeable challenge for current residents of Georgia's HBCU communities. ACP enrollment is relatively low amongst respondents, with people in rural communities and seniors lagging the most in terms of participation in the program	• **51%** of individuals do not find the current cost of internet affordable. **78%** respondents consider **$0 – 50** as affordable • ACP enrollment is low amongst respondents, with only **9%** enrolled in the program • Significant majority of members of covered populations are not enrolled in ACP (e.g., seniors (**94%**), people living in rural communities (**94%**), people living with disability (**89%**) and veterans (**86%**)) • The main barrier preventing Georgia respondents from ACP participation is lack of awareness of the program or its benefits (**76%**) and lack of knowledge on how to sign up (**49%**)

Synthesis of insights from Georgia survey respondents

Key takeaway	Initial insights
Individuals in Georgia are likely to have sufficient devices to serve their needs at home, but only 55% have access in public spaces	• **97%** of respondents have access to at least one working computer or tablet • **55%** of respondents have access to readily available public computers nearby
Most respondents are confident in their use of internet across most activities, but slightly lack confidence with making financial transactions as well as completing work tasks	• Individuals indicate high confidence across most activities, specifically when it comes to making financial transactions (**72%**), shopping online (**70%**) and searching for information (**68%**) • Only **3%** lack confidence when making financial transactions or searching for an answer respectively
Majority of individuals are not aware of workforce development/digital skills training programs. Lack of awareness is especially high across covered populations	• **78%** of individuals are not aware of workforce development training programs available in their community • Lack of awareness is especially high amongst veterans (**100%**), individuals living in rural communities (**94%**), seniors (**83%**) and members of a racial or ethnic underrepresented minority (**73%**) • Community organizations serve low-income individuals (**83%**) and those with low level of literacy (**75%**) well, while those with a language barrier (**42%**), incarcerated (**42%**), or members of minority group (**50%**), receive less support

Significant number of individuals surveyed are college students, educators, or government employees; organizations surveyed predominantly represent higher ed institutions and non-profits

Individual respondents by occupation

(# of respondents, N = 108 individuals)

College student	Educator	Government employee	Other working professional[1]	Business owner	Retiree	Medical worker	Not currently working	Trades person or artisan[2]
50 (46%)	21 (19%)	16 (15%)	8 (7%)	6 (6%)	4 (4%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)

Organization respondents

(# of respondents, N = 17 organizations)

Non-profit	Higher education	Faith-based	Public or government agency	Other	K-12 school	Small business	Corporate entity
6 (35%)	5 (29%)	3 (18%)	2 (12%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

1. Includes lawyers, accountants, etc.
2. Includes mechanics, electricians, construction workers, etc.

Source: SFI Community Survey, Georgia, November 2023

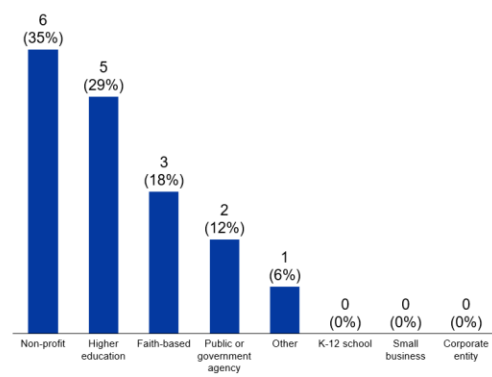DOCUMENT INTENDED TO PROVIDE INSIGHT FOR CONSIDERATION BASED ON CURRENTLY AVAILABLE INFORMATION AND IS NOT INTENDED TO PRESCRIBE SPECIFIC ACTION

Appendix B

Synthesis of insights from Georgia's community needs assessment

Based on this analysis, there are **4 potential focus areas to increase broadband and digital equity in Georgia's HBCU communities:**

- Increase broadband adoption amongst those without subscriptions
- Prioritize developing broadband infrastructure in lower income communities
- Expand broadband availability to the remaining underserved and unserved locations
- Address additional challenges with internet and device affordability and access

Digital equity dimension	Initial insights
Broadband adoption	**Approximately 50% and 56% households do not have a broadband subscription in Albany State and Fort Valley State's surrounding communities,** which is up to ~25pp higher than the state average
Infrastructure	Though most Georgia HBCU communities are deemed well-served, there are **still many unserved and underserved locations that have yet to receive federal funding** – this number is as high as 100% in the AUC, Paine College, and Savannah State University's communities
Device access	While most households own at least 1 computing device – the communities range from 83-93%– **there is opportunity to increase the share with access to a laptop/desktop computers.** Approximately 51-75% of households own these devices in these communities compared to the state average of 79%.
Affordability	**Most of the households in these communities are likely to be facing affordability challenges** – 26-48% of families are living on less than 150% FPL and up to 54% of households in communities like Albany State and Paine are ACP-eligible – **but ACP uptake is overall strong (ranging from 43-80%) with potential to increase enrollment rates**
Digital literacy	Up to 24% of the communities' populations could be a priority for digital literacy **outreach** – this includes those above the age of 25 with less than a high school degree and those with income at the poverty level
Demographics	The HBCUs are in **diverse surrounding communities,** where a **significantly higher share of their respective Black populations** reside – up to 83% in Albany State's community – compared to the state (31%)

Source: US Census Bureau 2021 ACS 5-year estimates, US Census ACS Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), CostQuest, FCC DATA Maps May 2023, USAC, Education Superhighway ACP Enrollment Dashboard   4
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Current state of digital equity across SFI target HBCUs in Georgia

PRELIMINARY, WORK IN PROGRESS
As of October 2023

Legend:
- Not compared to state
- On par with state (within +/- 5pp)
- Lower than state (>5pp in negative direction)
- Higher than state (>5pp in positive direction)

Digital equity dimension	Metric	Albany State	Atlanta University Center	Fort Valley State	Paine	Savannah State	State	National
Broadband adoption	HHs with an internet subscription	69%	79%	74%	74%	87%	86%	87%
	HHs with broadband[1]	44%	60%	50%	57%	70%	71%	72%
Infrastructure	Share of served locations	99%	99.6%	75%	99.9%	99.7%	89%	-
	Unserved and underserved locations unfunded by federal programs[2]	92%	100%	34%	100%	100%	65%	-
	ISPs providing fiber technology[2]	2	8	1	4	4	-	-
Device access	HHs with access to ≥1 device[3]	84%	89%	83%	84%	93%	93%	93%
	HHs with a desktop or laptop	51%	68%	61%	60%	75%	79%	79%
Affordability	Families <150% FPL[4]	48%	38%	27%	35%	26%	18%	16%
	ACP-eligible HHs	54%	39%	51%	54%	50%	43%	42%
	ACP-eligible HHs enrolled	80%	68%	54%	43%	48%	38%	36%
Digital literacy	Families 100-125% FPL	7%	6%	5%	4%	6%	4%	3%
	Aged 25+ without high school degree	24%	14%	19%	18%	11%	12%	11%
Demographics	Racial/ethnic URP[5]	86%	82%	72%	63%	59%	44%	35%
	Black population	83%	75%	59%	55%	52%	31%	12%
	Living with a disability	20%	18%	16%	21%	15%	12%	13%
	Living in rural areas[6,7]	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	15%	15%

1. Broadband defined as fiber, cable, or DSL internet.
2. As of May 2023, based on the FCC DATA maps; does not account for any challenges. Federal funding awarded to ISPs as part of CAF II, RDOF, RBE, Reconnect, NTIA BIP, and RUS.
3. Includes smartphones
4. FPL = federal poverty level
5. URP = Under-represented population
6. Using OMB definition of rurality (i.e., <50,000 population)
7. Uses 2020 Census Tracts and population data (consistent with other metrics listed)

Note: Atlanta University Center includes Clark Atlanta University, Interdenominational Theological Center, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine, Morris Browne College, and Spelman College

Source: US Census Bureau 2021 ACS 5-year estimates, US Census ACS Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), CostQuest, FCC DATA Maps May 2023, USAC, Education Superhighway ACP Enrollment Dashboard   5
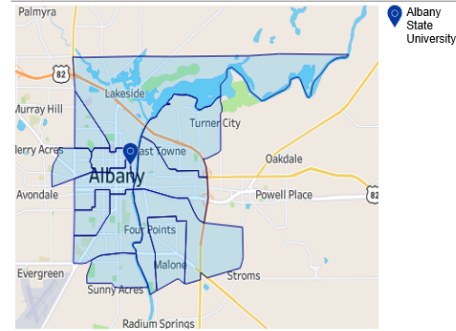DOCUMENT INTENDED TO PROVIDE INSIGHT FOR CONSIDERATION BASED ON CURRENTLY AVAILABLE INFORMATION AND IS NOT INTENDED TO PRESCRIBE SPECIFIC ACTION

Albany State University's surrounding community is home to 34% of the population in Dougherty County, Georgia

Albany State University's surrounding community
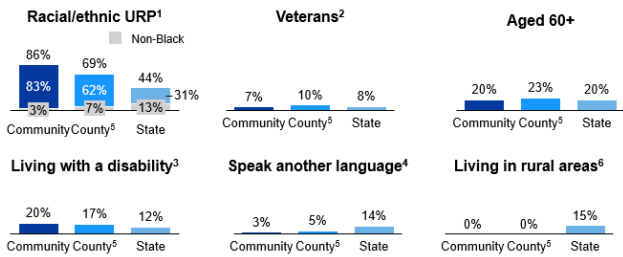

Albany State University

Note: The surrounding community is defined as the census tracts within a 2-mile radius of the university (total of 12 census tracts)
1. Under-represented population (URP) includes Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and Two or more races.
2. Share of the civilian population aged 18 and over.
3. Share of the civilian non-institutionalized population.
4. Share of the population aged 5 and over.
5. Excludes the census tracts included in Albany State University's surrounding community. Defined as census tracts 106.01, 114, 14.03, 2, 7, 8, 9, 107.01, 107.02, 113, 15, 103.02 in Dougherty County, GA
6. Rurality is defined by Office of Management and Budget as populations < 50,000
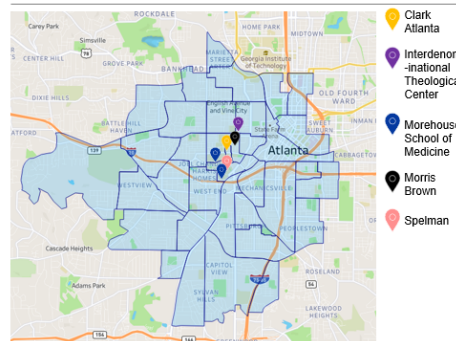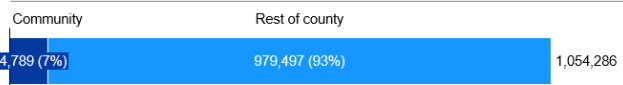Source: US Census Bureau 2021 ACS 5-year estimates

2021 Population

Community	Rest of county	
29,603 (34%)	57,222 (66%)	86,825

2021 Covered Populations, % of total population

Racial/ethnic URP[1] — Non-Black
- Community: 86% (83% / 3%)
- County[5]: 69% (62% / 7%)
- State: 44% (13% / 31%)

Veterans[2]
- Community: 7%
- County[5]: 10%
- State: 8%

Aged 60+
- Community: 20%
- County[5]: 23%
- State: 20%

Living with a disability[3]
- Community: 20%
- County[5]: 17%
- State: 12%

Speak another language[4]
- Community: 3%
- County[5]: 5%
- State: 14%

Living in rural areas[6]
- Community: 0%
- County[5]: 0%
- State: 15%

9

The surrounding community for the HBCUs in the Atlanta University Center (AUC) is home to ~7% of the population in Fulton County, Georgia
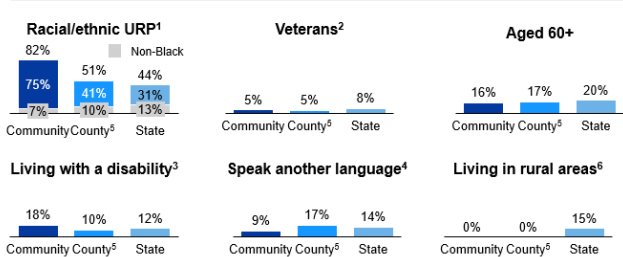
The AUC's surrounding community

- Clark Atlanta
- Interdenom-inational Theological Center
- Morehouse / School of Medicine
- Morris Brown
- Spelman

Note: The surrounding community is defined as the census tracts within a 2-mile radius of the AUC (total of 34 census tracts)
1. Under-represented population (URP) includes Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and Two or more races.
2. Share of the civilian population aged 18 and over.
3. Share of the civilian non-institutionalized population.
4. Share of the population aged 5 and over.
5. Excludes the census tracts included in the AUC's surrounding community. Defined as census tracts 43, 118.02, 19.02, 119.01, 25, 62, 42, 37, 120, 21, 23, 24, 26, 35, 38, 40, 41, 44, 48, 39, 49, 84, 55.01, 57, 58, 61, 63, 65, 60, 36, 67.01, 118.01, 66.02, 66.01 in Fulton, GA.
6. Rurality is defined by Office of Management and Budget as populations < 50,000
Source: US Census Bureau 2021 ACS 5-year estimates

2021 Population

Community	Rest of county	
74,789 (7%)	979,497 (93%)	1,054,286

2021 Covered Populations, % of total population

Racial/ethnic URP[1] — Non-Black
- Community: 82% (75% / 7%)
- County[5]: 51% (41% / 10%)
- State: 44% (31% / 13%)

Veterans[2]
- Community: 5%
- County[5]: 5%
- State: 8%

Aged 60+
- Community: 16%
- County[5]: 17%
- State: 20%

Living with a disability[3]
- Community: 18%
- County[5]: 10%
- State: 12%

Speak another language[4]
- Community: 9%
- County[5]: 17%
- State: 14%

Living in rural areas[6]
- Community: 0%
- County[5]: 0%
- State: 15%

13

Fort Valley State University's surrounding community is home to 54% of the population in Peach County, Georgia

PRELIMINARY, WORK IN PROGRESS

Fort Valley State University's surrounding community
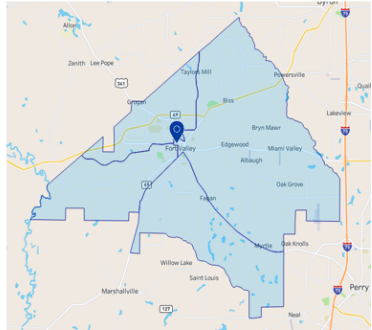
Note: The surrounding community is defined as the census tracts within a 2-mile radius of the university (total of 4 census tracts)

2021 Population

Community	Rest of county	
14,952 (54%)	12,870 (46%)	27,822

2021 Covered Populations, % of total population

Racial/ethnic URP[1]

Non-Black

	72%	34%	44%
Community	59%	27%	31%
	13%	7%	13%

Community | County[5] | State

Veterans[2]

| 9% | 11% | 8% |

Community | County[5] | State

Aged 60+

| 21% | 23% | 20% |

Community | County[5] | State

Living with a disability[3]

| 16% | 17% | 12% |

Community | County[5] | State

Speak another language[4]

| 10% | 4% | 14% |

Community | County[5] | State

Living in rural areas[6]

| 100% | 0% | 15% |

Community | County[5] | State

1. Under-represented population (URP) includes Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and Two or more races.
2. Share of the civilian population aged 18 and over.
3. Share of the civilian non-institutionalized population.
4. Share of the population aged 5 and over.
5. Excludes the census tracts included in Fort Valley State University's surrounding community. Defined as census tracts 404, 402, 403.01, 403.02 in Peach County, GA
6. Rurality is defined by Office of Management and Budget as populations < 50,000

Source: US Census Bureau 2021 ACS 5-year estimates

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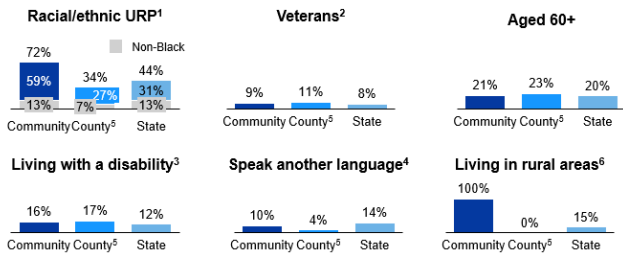
17

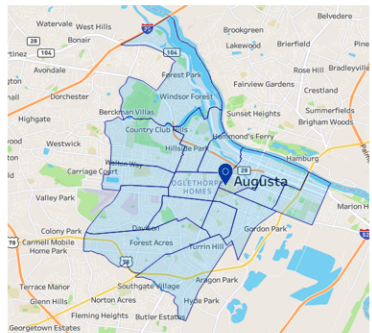# Paine College's surrounding community is home to 20% of the population in Richmond County, Georgia

PRELIMINARY, WORK IN PROGRESS

Paine College's surrounding community

Note: The surrounding community is defined as the census tracts within a 2-mile radius of the college (total of 15 census tracts)

2021 Population

Community	Rest of county	
41,118 (20%)	164,654 (80%)	205,772

2021 Covered Populations, % of total population

Racial/ethnic URP[1]

Non-Black

	63%	65%	44%
Community	55%	55%	31%
	7%	10%	13%

Community | County[5] | State

Veterans[2]

| 8% | 15% | 8% |

Community | County[5] | State

Aged 60+

| 24% | 14% | 20% |

Community | County[5] | State

Living with a disability[3]

| 21% | 17% | 12% |

Community | County[5] | State

Speak another language[4]

| 5% | 8% | 14% |

Community | County[5] | State

Living in rural areas[6]

| 0% | 0% | 15% |

Community | County[5] | State

1. Under-represented population (URP) includes Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and Two or more races.
2. Share of the civilian population aged 18 and over.
3. Share of the civilian non-institutionalized population.
4. Share of the population aged 5 and over.
5. Excludes the census tracts included in Paine College's surrounding community. Defined as census tracts 101.01, 1, 104, 6, 7, 10, 2, 11, 12, 13, 14, 110, 103, 3, 111 in Richmont County, GA
6. Rurality is defined by Office of Management and Budget as populations < 50,000
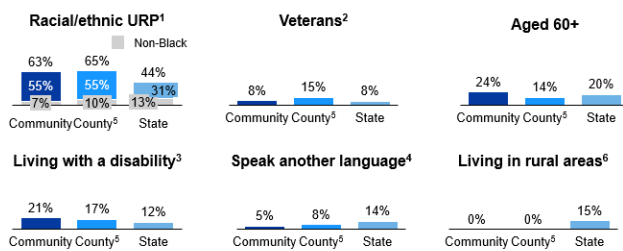
Source: US Census Bureau 2021 ACS 5-year estimates

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21

Savannah State University's surrounding community is home to ~16% of the population in Chatham County, Georgia

PRELIMINARY, WORK IN PROGRESS

Savannah State University's surrounding community

Savannah State University

Note: The surrounding community is defined as the census tracts within a 2-mile radius of the university (total of 13 census tracts)

1. Under-represented population (URP) includes Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and Two or more races.
2. Share of the civilian population aged 18 and over.
3. Share of the civilian non-institutionalized population.
4. Share of the population aged 5 and over.
5. Excludes the census tracts included in Savannah State University's surrounding community. Defined as census tracts 101.02, 102, 30, 35.02, 27, 22, 111.15, 35.01, 36.02, 38, 39, 40.01, 40.02 in Chatham County, GA.
6. Rurality is defined by Office of Management and Budget as populations < 50,000

Source: US Census Bureau 2021 ACS 5-year estimates

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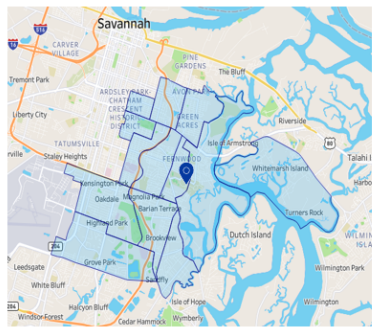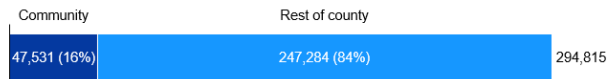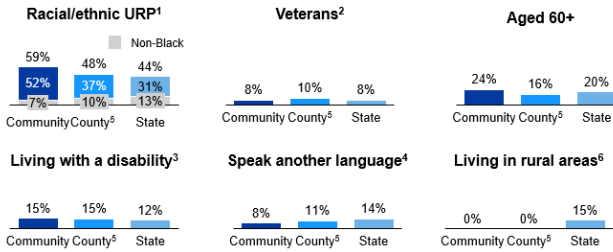
2021 Population

Community	Rest of county	
47,531 (16%)	247,284 (84%)	294,815

2021 Covered Populations, % of total population

Racial/ethnic URP[1]

Non-Black

	Community	County[5]	State
	59%	48%	44%
	52%	37%	31%
	7%	10%	13%

Veterans[2]

Community	County[5]	State
8%	10%	8%

Aged 60+

Community	County[5]	State
24%	16%	20%

Living with a disability[3]

Community	County[5]	State
15%	15%	12%

Speak another language[4]

Community	County[5]	State
8%	11%	14%

Living in rural areas[6]

Community	County[5]	State
0%	0%	15%

25