American Immigration Council

DECEMBER 2022

FACT SHEET

Examining Gaps in Digital Inclusion in Utah

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has vividly illustrated the economic and social costs of digital inequities—costs that have fallen disproportionately on people in marginalized communities, including immigrants, people of color, people with disabilities, and families living in poverty.

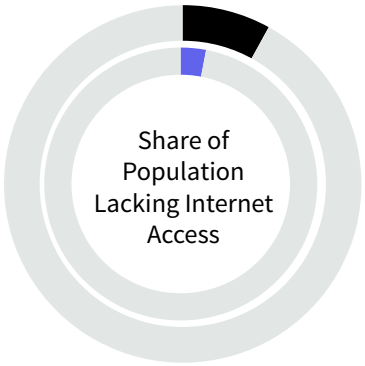
The inability to access high-speed, broadband internet makes participating in modern life difficult, especially given that information and services are increasingly provided online.[1] Applying for a job, accessing education, finding information on public services or health matters, and much more depend on digital access. Past research has already shown the scale of the digital divide: As recently as 2018, more than one in five low-income households had no access to the internet, compared with only about 1 in 20 of all other households that didn't have access.[2]

Income, however, is not the only factor that distinguishes differences in broadband access. The Digital Equity Act of 2021, as part of the landmark Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, identifies several covered groups of people who suffer disproportionately from gaps in access to broadband internet service.[3] These populations include:[4]

- Individuals who live in households with an annual household income that is at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level
- Aging individuals, defined as those 60 years of age or older
- Veterans
- Individuals with disabilities
- Individuals with a language barrier, including those who are English learners and those who have low levels of literacy
- Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group
- Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area

In this report, we use data from the American Community Survey to examine the scale of the challenge and to see how many, and which, Americans could be helped by expanding broadband internet service.[5]

Utah Overview



United States Utah

In Utah, nearly

105,000

people, or

1 in 33

lacked internet service as recently as 2019, including dial-up internet service.

Nationally, nearly

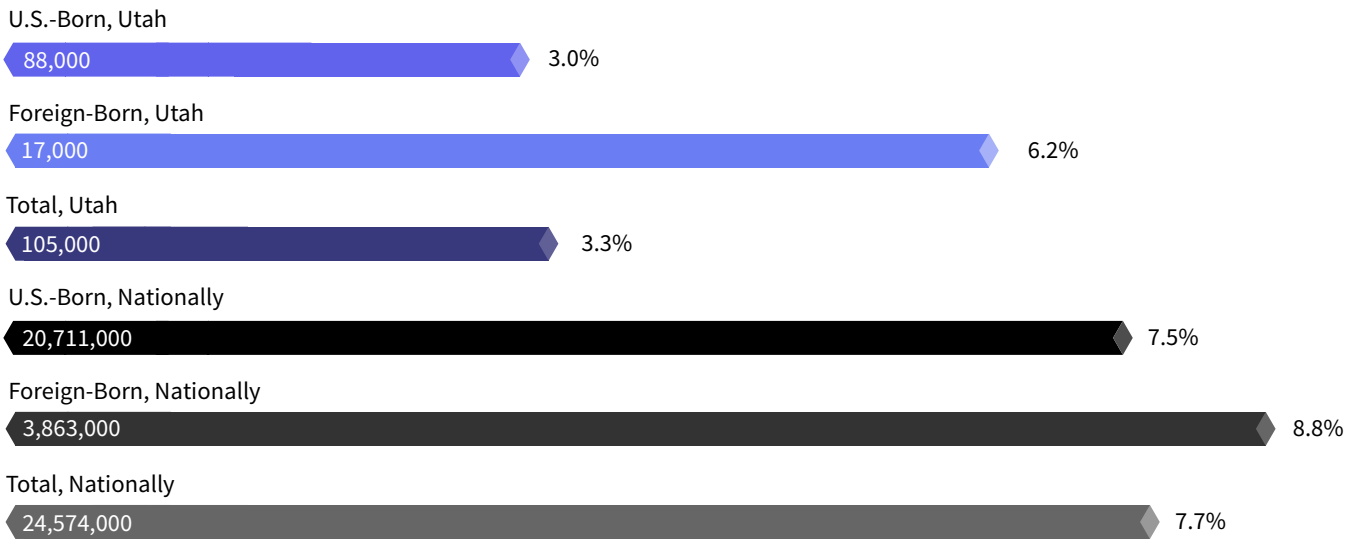
24.6M

people, or

1 in 13

did not have internet access at home during the same period.

TABLE 1: SHARE OF INDIVIDUALS WITHOUT INTERNET, BY NATIVITY, 2019



If we look at high-speed, broadband internet access alone, then significantly fewer people have access at home. The access to high-speed, broadband internet is essential to the ability to work or study from home. In 2019, nearly one in five, or 18.6 percent, of people in Utah lacked access to broadband internet. In total, approximately 569,000 people were without broadband access at home.

Immigrants were more likely to lack broadband internet access than those born in the United States: 30.1 percent of immigrants lacked home broadband access compared with 17.6 percent of the U.S.-born. In total, approximately 77,000 immigrants did not have high-speed internet at home.

In addition to the internet, people also need a computer or tablet if they are to develop and maintain digital literacy or access the information and services increasingly offered online. In 2019, approximately 197,000 people in Utah did not have access to either a desktop, laptop, or tablet computer.

Immigrants appear to suffer from poorer access to digital tools, with 13.9 percent of immigrants in Utah lacking access to a computer or tablet compared with just 5.5 percent of U.S.-born individuals.

TABLE 2: SHARE OF INDIVIDUALS WITHOUT BROADBAND INTERNET, BY NATIVITY, 2019

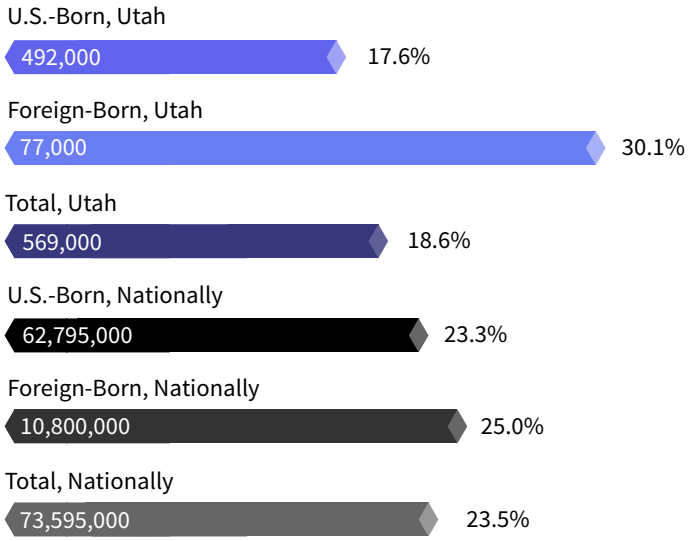
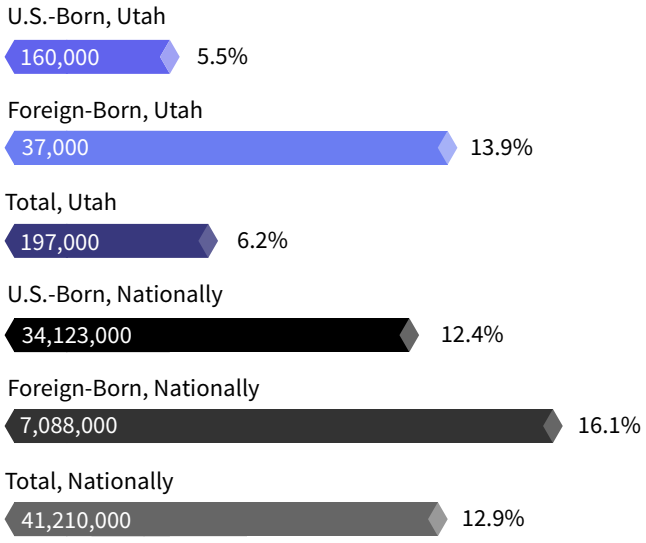


TABLE 3: SHARE OF INDIVIDUALS WITHOUT ACCESS TO A COMPUTER, LAPTOP, OR TABLET, BY NATIVITY, 2019



Broadband Access among Covered Individuals

People in Households at or below 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level

Unsurprisingly, people in lower-income households had less access to high-speed internet at home. While 18.6 percent of the overall Utah population lacked broadband internet in 2019, 40.4 percent of people living at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level did not have high-speed internet at home. Approximately 62,000 people in lower-income households did not have broadband internet access.

TABLE 4: INDIVIDUALS IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH INCOMES AT OR BELOW 150 PERCENT OF THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL LACKING BROADBAND ACCESS, BY NATIVITY, 2019

	Population Lacking Broadband Access	Share of Population Lacking Broadband Access
UTAH		
U.S. Born, Utah	**50,000**	**38.2%**
Foreign-Born, Utah	**13,000**	**52.5%**
Total, Utah	**62,000**	**40.4%**
UNITED STATES		
U.S.-Born, Nationally	**9,054,000**	**47.5%**
Foreign-Born, Nationally	**2,031,000**	**44.7%**
Total, Nationally	**11,085,000**	**47.0%**

Aging People (Those over 60 Years of Age)

Similarly, older people are more likely to lack high-speed internet at home. Over one in four, or 27.3 percent, of people in Utah over the age of 60 did not have broadband internet at home in 2019. Approximately 135,000 people over the age of 60 did not have broadband internet access at home.

TABLE 5: AGING PEOPLE LACKING BROADBAND ACCESS, BY NATIVITY, 2019

	Population Lacking Broadband Access	Share of Population Lacking Broadband Access
UTAH		
U.S. Born, Utah	**122,000**	**26.9%**
Foreign-Born, Utah	**13,000**	**32.6%**
Total, Utah	**135,000**	**27.3%**
UNITED STATES		
U.S.-Born, Nationally	**20,083,000**	**32.8%**
Foreign-Born, Nationally	**3,175,000**	**31.0%**
Total, Nationally	**23,258,000**	**32.6%**

Veterans

Veterans had broadband internet access at rates slightly higher to that of the overall U.S. population, with 24.8 percent of veterans in Utah lacking high-speed internet access at home. Approximately 27,000 veterans did not have high-speed internet at home.

TABLE 6: VETERANS LACKING BROADBAND ACCESS, 2019

	Population Lacking Broadband Access	Share of Population Lacking Broadband Access
Total, Utah	**27,000**	**24.8%**
Total, Nationally	**4,494,000**	**27.0%**

People with Disabilities

People living with disabilities were significantly more likely to lack high-speed internet access at home. In 2019, 28.2 percent of people with a disability did not have broadband internet at home. This is lower than the national share of 35.9 percent of people living with disabilities who did not have broadband internet at home.

TABLE 7: PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES LACKING BROADBAND ACCESS, 2019

	Population Lacking Broadband Access	Share of Population Lacking Broadband Access
Total, Utah	**76,000**	**28.2%**
U.S.-Born, Nationally	**14,037,000**	**35.9%**

Limited English Proficiency Speakers

Among those who speak a language other than English at home and speak English "less than well"—what we define as Limited English Proficiency (LEP) speakers—the rate of those without high-speed internet at home is significantly higher. In 2019, 45.2 percent, of LEP individuals in Utah did not have high-speed internet at home. Approximately 28,000 LEP individuals were without high-speed internet.

TABLE 8: LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT (LEP) SPEAKERS LACKING BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS, 2019

	Population Lacking Broadband Access	Share of Population Lacking Broadband Access
Total, Utah	**28,000**	**45.2%**
Total, Nationally	**4,782,000**	**38.7%**

Rural Residents

Rural communities disproportionately lack broadband coverage, often due to inadequate infrastructure networks. In 2019, 41.3 percent of people living in rural communities in Utah lacked access to broadband internet. In total, approximately 402,000 people were without broadband internet at home.

Immigrants who live in rural communities were slightly less likely to face poorer access to broadband coverage in Utah, with 40.6 percent of immigrants lacking access to broadband internet, compared to 41.3 percent of U.S.-born individuals.

The data show that almost 16 million residents of non-metropolitan counties in the United States—those areas farthest from larger towns and cities—lacked access to broadband internet at home in 2019. More than one in three, or 36.7 percent, of rural residents did not have high-speed internet access at home.

TABLE 9: ACCESS TO BROADBAND INTERNET AMONG RURAL RESIDENTS, BY NATIVITY, 2019

	Population Lacking Broadband Access	Share of Population Lacking Broadband Access
UTAH		
U.S. Born, Utah	**390,000**	**41.3%**
Foreign-Born, Utah	**11,000**	**40.6%**
Total, Utah	**402,000**	**41.3%**
UNITED STATES		
U.S.-Born, Nationally	**15,330,000**	**36.6%**
Foreign-Born, Nationally	**638,000**	**39.3%**
Total, Nationally	**15,968,000**	**36.7%**

Racial and Ethnic Minorities

Racial and ethnic minority groups (including non-white or Hispanic) in Utah have lower rates of broadband coverage compared to the overall state population. While 18.6 percent of the overall Utah population lacked broadband internet in 2019, more than one in four, or 26.1 percent, of racial and ethnic minorities did not have high-speed internet at home. Approximately 176,000 individuals in a racial and ethnic minority group did not have broadband internet access.

Immigrants were more likely to face poorer access to broadband coverage, with 32.8 percent of immigrants in Utah lacking access to broadband internet compared to 23.1 percent of U.S.-born individuals.

TABLE 10: BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS, FOR ALL ETHNIC MINORITIES (NON-WHITE OR HISPANIC), 2019

	Population Lacking Broadband Access	Share of Population Lacking Broadband Access
U.S. Born, Utah	**107,000**	**23.1%**
Foreign-Born, Utah	**69,000**	**32.8%**
Total, Utah	**176,000**	**26.1%**

ENDNOTES

1. National Digital Inclusion Alliance, "Definitions," accessed March 25, 2022, https://www.digitalinclusion.org/definitions/.
2. New American Economy, "Back to School: A Look at the Internet Access Gap," August 6, 2020, https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/internet-access-covid-19/.
3. H.R. 3684: Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/117/hr3684/text/enr.
4. Given data limitations in the American Community Survey, information on broadband internet access of incarcerated individuals is not possible, even though they are also designated as a "covered population."
5. Due to rounding, numbers presented throughout this report may not add up precisely to the given totals and percentages may not precisely reflect the absolute figures.