DATABASE OF LOW/NO COST BROADBAND ACCESS FOR OLDER ADULTS

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CONTENTS

Broadband internet—a high-speed, always-on connection delivered via cable, DSL, fiber-optic, or wireless networks—has become essential infrastructure for daily life (Oughton et al., 2021; Savage & Waldman, 2005). Defined by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as providing minimum speeds of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload, broadband enables faster data transmission than traditional dial-up, allowing users to browse, stream, and communicate with minimal delay (Federal Communications Commission, 2025).

Beyond convenience, broadband now underpins access to critical services such as information, civic participation, telehealth, and virtual education. Over the past two decades, rapid advancements in broadband infrastructure—including the expansion of 4G and 5G networks—have fundamentally reshaped how people work, access healthcare, and stay connected (Martin, 2018; Pahlavan & Krishnamurthy, 2021). Yet, broadband adoption in the U.S. remains stratified along lines of age, income, race, geography, and education.

As of 2021, approximately 77% of U.S. adults reported having home broadband subscriptions, while 91% owned at least one internet-enabled device (Perrin, 2021). In other words, nearly one in four Americans remain without high-speed internet at home—a statistic that does not account for those who are "underconnected," relying on unstable or slow internet. Financial barriers are a major driver: among non-adopters, 45% cited the monthly cost of broadband as unaffordable, and 37% noted the cost of necessary devices such as computers (Perrin, 2021).

The adoption of broadband-capable devices is significantly lower among older adults or those over 65. This disparity is particularly pronounced among adults aged 75 and older, only 43% of whom report owning a smartphone (Martin, 2018; Perrin, 2021). Broadband adoption is similarly uneven along lines of socioeconomic status. For instance, just 57% of adults living in households earning less than $30,000 annually report having home broadband access, compared to 92% of those in households earning $75,000 or more. These patterns are mirrored in educational attainment, where lower levels of education correlate with reduced rates of technology adoption (Perrin, 2021).
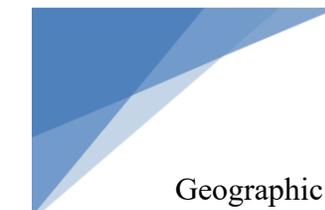
Geographic and racial disparities further exacerbate these challenges. Rural residents and tribal communities continue to face significant gaps in infrastructure, with broadband coverage on tribal lands particularly limited due to lack of investment and infrastructure costs. As of 2018, less than half of American Indian and Indigenous people living on reservations had access to high-speed internet (Early & Hernandez, 2021). Meanwhile, 80% of white adults report home broadband access, compared to 71% of Black adults and 65% of Hispanic adults (Early & Hernandez, 2021; Perrin, 2021). These overlapping barriers—related to age, race, income, education, and geography—compound the risks of digital exclusion for older adults and those occupying multiple marginalized identities.

BROADBAND ACCESS AS A SOCIAL DETERMINANT OF HEALTH

Broadband access plays an increasingly recognized role in shaping population health. While its economic benefits—such as increases in property values and business development—are well-documented, a growing body of research highlights broadband's impact on health outcomes as well (Briglauer et al., 2024; Deller et al., 2021; Early & Hernandez, 2021; Whitacre, 2024). Analyses of U.S. county-level data show that greater broadband availability is associated with measurable improvements in public health: areas with higher access tend to report fewer days of poor physical and mental health, and a smaller proportion of residents rating their health as "fair" or "poor" (Gawai & Deller, 2025).

For older adults, who face elevated health risks and are disproportionately affected by social isolation, broadband access serves as an enabler of healthy aging. Stable internet connectivity facilitates engagement with telehealth platforms, virtual caregiving services, medication management tools, and online support communities. Beyond healthcare access, broadband promotes social connection through video conferencing platforms and supports cognitive stimulation by enabling regular engagement with news, literature, and other informational content (Amini et al., 2019; Noone et al., 2020). It may also enhance personal safety through the use of home security technologies and real-time emergency alerts. However, those who stand to benefit most from these digital resources—particularly older adults with limited income, education, or mobility—are often the least likely to have reliable access (Early & Hernandez, 2021).

Communities experiencing high rates of poverty and poor health outcomes often overlap geographically with those that lack affordable, reliable internet access. In this way, broadband infrastructure functions as both a marker of structural inequality and a tool for intervention. For example, studies in the United Kingdom have found that individuals with internet access are more likely to demonstrate higher health literacy, enabling them to better seek, understand, and apply health-related information (Estacio et al., 2017). U.S.-based research echoes this trend, showing that internet use among older adults can increase health literacy by approximately 12% (Bavafa et al., 2019; Gawai & Deller, 2025)

These findings emphasize that digital access is a determinant of health equity. The expansion of affordable and reliable broadband, especially for low-income, rural, aging, and marginalized populations, improves health outcomes and moves us towards equitable access to care in the digital age. Recognizing the health and equity stakes tied to internet access, the following sections outline practical resources available to help older adults connect to affordable home Wi-Fi through governmental, nonprofit, and service-based programs.

EXPANDING HOME WIFI/INTERNET ACCESS FOR OLDER ADULTS

BACKGROUND

Whether you use a smartphone, tablet, or personal computer (a "device") internet access is gained through a wifi router, which is a wireless transmitter that carries radio waves from your device.

You might have a personal router in your home or apartment or it could be a shared resource provided by the apartment complex.

In either case there is some setup time and passwords to establish the connection.

TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

1) **Ask If Your Building Has Community Wi-Fi**

Some senior housing communities already have free or discounted internet provided to residents. Ask your property manager, resident coordinator, or social worker to see what is available.

2) **Use a Free or Discounted Internet Program**

There are government, nonprofit, and service provider programs in the databases below that help older adults get online at little or no cost.

You will typically need:
- Proof of income or receiving social service (SSI, SNAP, Medicaid, etc.)
- Photo ID (driver's license, state ID, or passport)
- Social Security Number or alternative ID number (for Lifeline)
- A mailing address (PO Boxes often accepted)

3) **Get Help if You Are Stuck**
- Digital Navigators - People trained to help you get online
  - National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA): Offers a directory of local digital navigator programs: www.digitalinclusion.org
  - Older Adults Technology Services (OATS)/Senior Planet: www.seniorplanet.org provides free classes, one-on-one tech help, and digital navigator referrals
  - Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs): Local centers can help older adults find tech support and digital inclusion programs nearby
- Public Libraries - Staff can typically assist with forms and applications
- Area Agencies on Aging - Can connect you with one-on-one technical support over the phone

4) **Stay Safe**

Governmental programs, such as Lifeline, are free to apply to and never ask for payment upfront. Be careful not to expose social security numbers or credit card or bank account information unnecessarily. If someone asks for personal information you did not expect to provide, pause and ask for help.

Program Name	Provider	Benefits	Eligibility Criteria	Application process	Geographic Availability	Additional Notes
ConnectHome USA	U.S. Department of Home and Urban Development	Provides affordable or free internet connectivity, access to digital literacy programs, and devices like computers or tablets.	Residents of HUD-assisted housing, including Public Housing Authorities (PHAs), Tribally Designated Housing Entities (TDHEs), and Multifamily housing providers.	Application process varies by community. Residents should contact their local public housing authority or visit HUD's ConnectHomeUSA page (https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/connecthomeusa/) for more information.	Active in various communities across the United States encompassing metropolitan areas, cities, counties, and tribal nations.	Residents may access bundled digital literacy programs and, in some communities, free or subsidized Wi-Fi installations in multi-unit housing.
Lifeline	Federal Communications Commission	Reduces the cost of phone or internet services. Provides up to $9.25 per month discount for phone or internet service, or up to $34.25 for those on Tribal lands.	Individuals with an income at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines or those participating in federal assistance programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are eligible.	Apply online by creating an account on the Lifeline National Verifier portal (https://getinternet.gov/apply?id=nv_flow&ln=RW5nbGlzaA%3D%3D), through a participating phone or internet company, or by mailing a completed application and proof documents to the Lifeline Support Center. Applicants will need their name, birthdate, last 4 digits of their SSN or Tribal ID, and home address. Assistance is available for applicants with disabilities via the Lifeline Support Center.	Nationwide	Enhanced discounts are available for residents of Tribal lands. Only one Lifeline discount is available per household.

5

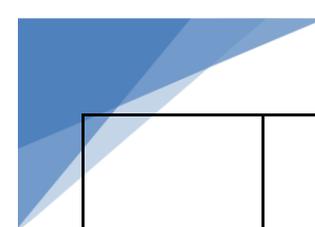| Program Name	Provider	Benefits	Eligibility Criteria	Application process	Geographic Availability	Additional Notes
Everyone On	Everyone On	Access to low-cost internet service plans. Assistance in finding affordable computers and digital literacy training.	Individuals with an income at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines or those participating in federal assistance programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are eligible.	Application process varies based on available offers. Begin by using the Offer Locator Tool on the EveryoneOn website (https://www.everyoneon.org/find-offers). Will need documentation of qualifying income or support programs in addition to governmental identification.	Nationwide with a focus on communities in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, and Central Valley areas.	Use the Offer Locator Tool on the EveryoneOn website (https://www.everyoneon.org/find-offers) to find specific low-cost internet and device offers available in your area by entering your ZIP code.
PCs for People	PC for People	Provides affordable computers, low-cost internet, digital skills training, e-waste recycling, and computer repairs.	Individuals with an income at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines or 60% of area median income. Those participating in federal assistance programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are eligible.	Email or place an order through the PCs for People website (https://pcsrefurbished.com/sales/register). Will need documentation of qualifying income or support programs in addition to governmental identification.	Nationwide	Once approved, eligible users can purchase low-cost internet and devices immediately. Shipping is available nationwide, and devices come with a warranty and support. PCs for People also offers tech recycling services and runs pop-up events in select cities.

Program Name	Provider	Benefits	Eligibility Criteria	Application process	Geographic Availability	Additional Notes
Access from AT&T	AT&T	Offers affordable internet plans starting at $30/month for speeds up to 100 Mbps, with an additional $20/month discount available for eligible customers on fiber plans ranging from 300 Mbps to 1 GIG.	Individuals with an income at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines or those participating in federal assistance programs in the 25 states where AT&T internet is available, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are eligible.	Apply and upload supporting information on ATT application page (att.com/access). Will need proof of qualifying income or support programs in addition to governmental identification.	Available in Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin.	This plan has no annual contact, no deposit, no installation fee, and no equipment fee. Must recertify eligibility for the program once a year.

Comcast Xfinity Internet Essentials	Xfinity	Provides affordable internet plans starting at $14.95/mo. For 4 devices or $29.95 enough data to connect 5 devices at one time.	Individuals may be eligible if they participate in qualifying federal or state assistance programs such as Housing Assistance, Medicaid, or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Applicants must not be current Xfinity Internet customers and must not have subscribed to Xfinity Internet within the past 90 days. Additionally, they must have no outstanding balance on any Comcast account that is less than one year old.	Apply and upload supporting information on Xfinity Page (https://apply.internetessentials.com/), or call 1-855-8-INTERNET. Will need documentation of qualifying income or support programs in addition to governmental identification.	Nationwide	This plan included unlimited access to Xfinity WiFi hotspots and digital skills training.
Connect Assist	Cox	Provides affordable internet plans starting at $30/mo. for 100 Mbps	To qualify for the ConnectAssist program, you must participate in at least one eligible government assistance program. These include SNAP, TANF, Head Start (for families meeting income requirements), WIC, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), certain public housing programs, the Federal Pell Grant, Veterans Pension or Survivors Pension, specific Tribal assistance programs, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and select state Medicaid programs.	Apply and upload information on Cox Page, begin by verifying eligibility (https://www.cox.com/residential-shop/wls/order-cox-services.html). Will need documentation of qualifying income or support programs in addition to governmental identification.	Nationwide	No term agreement with the internet plan.

8

Human-I-T Low Cost Internet	Human-I-T	Provides unlimited LTE connectivity for 14.99/mo., affordable devices, digital literacy training, and tech support.	Individuals with an income at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines or those participating in federal assistance programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are eligible.	Apply and upload supporting information on Human-I-T Page (https://www.human-i-t.org/). Will need documentation of qualifying income or support programs in addition to governmental identification. For additional support contact 1-888-391-7249.	Nationwide, see the following coverage map for specific zipcodes https://www.t-mobile.com/coverage/coverage-map.	Complete the form to schedule a one-on-one session with a digital navigator, who will help you identify the digital technology, internet options, and support services you may qualify for https://www.human-i-t.org/low-cost-internet/.
Internet First	Astound Broadband	Provides affordable internet plans of 150 Mbps starting at $19.95/mo.	Individuals residing in a serviceable area, participating in a public assistance program such as SNAP, Medicaid, or SSI, and not having had an active subscription to Astound Broadband internet services within the past 60 days.	Apply and upload supporting information on Astound Broadband Page (https://www.internetfirst.com/apply). Will need documentation of qualifying income or support programs in addition to governmental identification.	Available in locations in California, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Washington D.C.	No contracts, no credit checks, no installation fee.

Xtream Connect	Mediacom	Provides affordable internet plans of up to 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload speed at price of $14.99.	Individuals residing in a serviceable area, no outstanding Mediacom balance, and who either personally participate or have a household member participating in public assistance programs such as SNAP, Medicaid, or SSI, are eligible.	Apply and upload information on Mediacom Page, begin by verifying eligibility (https://mediacomcable.com/xtream-connect/xtream-connect-sign-up/). Will need documentation of qualifying income or support programs in addition to governmental identification.	Available in 22 states, see the following coverage map for specific zipcodes https://broadbandnow.com/Mediacom-Cable	May add home phones starting at $5/mo.
Optimum Advantage Internet	Optimum	Provides affordable internet plans of 50 Mbps Internet starting at 14.99/mo. with free installation and equipment	Individuals with an income at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines or those participating in federal assistance programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are eligible.	Apply and upload information on Optimum Page (https://www.optimum.com/check-availability). Will need documentation of qualifying income or support programs in addition to governmental identification.	Available in the 41 states where Spectrum operate	Free compatible Gateway modem and free WiFi extender, if needed. Ensures necessary equipment to access Optimums high speed internet, no additional costs
Spectrum Internet Assist	Spectrum	Provides affordable internet plans of 50 Mbps internet for	Spectrum Internet Assist eligibility if you participate in public assistance programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	Apply and upload information on Spectrum Page (https://www.spectrum.net/support/account-	Nationwide, input zipcode to see specific coverage https://www.sp	Currently operating in partnership with Lifeline in CA and NY.

| | | $25/mo. With possibility for additional discount reducing costs to $15 | (SNAP), Medicaid, or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) | and-billing/spectrum-internet-assist-and-internet-advantage). May also apply via mail.

Will need documentation of qualifying income or support programs in addition to governmental identification. | ectrum.com/internet/spectrum-internet-assist. | |

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