Stakeholder & Community Engagement Report

City of St. Louis

Digital Action Inclusion Plan

June 2023

Stakeholder Engagement – Key Findings

Interview composition

- 45 unique entities were interviewed
- 64 individuals participated in these interviews

| 11 City of St. Louis | 10 Nonprofit | 7 Individuals | 6 Local Government | 3 ISP | 3 Private Sector | 2 Quasi-Gov | 2 Educa-tion |

↗ 1 Federal

Key themes from internal and external stakeholder interviews

Broadband Access & Affordability

- **Broadband access and digital redlining reflects the 'Delmar Divide,'** with low income, predominantly Black neighborhoods in North City lacking fiber offerings. Fiber infrastructure investment should be prioritized in areas that have historically received lower investment
- **Improve coordination among the City, ISPs, and utilities to facilitate proactive broadband infrastructure deployment** as part of capital project planning and implementation (e.g., Dig Once/Smart Utilities)

Public Device & Internet Access

- **Demand for existing device programs exceeds supply**. The is need to expand existing device programs and identify ways to decrease cost (e.g., device recycling and refurbishment)
- **It isn't enough to give someone a device or internet access**. Residents need assistance in navigating and learning to use both devices and the internet itself
- **Integrate broadband into existing capital projects and plans.** There are capital project plans under consideration or in initial planning phases that align with this work, such as the Learning Labs Initiative, Project Connect, Greenway Project, and the Steinberg Ice Skating Rink/Forest Park renovation project

Digital Inclusion & Technical Support

- **Create living digital inclusion asset platform.** St. Louis has existing programs related to digital inclusion tackling digital literacy training, device distribution, etc., but there is no existing platform to provide information to the community on where these programs exist and how residents can access them
- **Provide trainings tied to specific tasks/skills such as** figuring out how to set up an email account to how to apply for ACP
- **Tailor digital training program resources to help address individual challenges to completing programs**. Program retention and graduation rates for tech training and workforce programs are impacted by multiple factors such as transportation, childcare, and program fit

Funding & Implementation

- **Build a dedicated city team** (office and/or DE coordinator to help energize and mobilize this work)
- **Develop a sustained funding structure** for existing programs that rely on ephemeral grant funding
- **The city should focus on quick-win projects with high impact** that can help build momentum and create private sector buy-in
- **Need for better coordination among the City, SLPL, SLPS, and external stakeholders** around expanding public internet access, devices, and digital inclusion & technical support programs

The stakeholder and community engagement approach was multi-pronged

Stakeholder and community engagement have been woven throughout the current state and infrastructure assessment

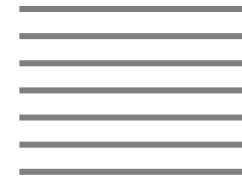Recurring meetings of the project Core Team and Working Group

+

Interviews with key stakeholders in addressing the digital divide and the digital inclusion design workshops*

+

Community meetings to discuss lived experiences and the broadband & digital inclusion survey

Action Plan

Digital Inclusion Action Plan

Stakeholder Engagement: Broadband Access & Affordability

Stakeholder and public engagement helped to validate and add nuance to the gaps and needs identified through research, the mapping analysis and need typology development

Key themes

- Existing infrastructure mirrors other issues in the City (poverty, low density, etc.)

- Areas **north of Delmar and vast areas of South City do not have access to the fiber that they need**, this correlates with neighborhood density

- **The JeffVanderLou neighborhood was frequently mentioned by stakeholders** when asked about potential pilot sites

- **Digital inclusion can be incorporated into existing infrastructure projects and initiatives,** such as public WiFi or leveraging dig once policies

Fiber infrastructure investment should be prioritized in areas that have historically received lower investment

Interviewee

"Dig right" policies have been a "pie in the sky" project…need stronger coordination between stakeholders on projects

Interviewee

General issue with older buildings and older infrastructure being a barrier to providing WiFi in centers, schools, and public housing

Interviewee

Stakeholder Engagement: Public Device & Internet Access

Stakeholder and public engagement helped to validate and add nuance to the gaps and needs identified through research, the mapping analysis and need typology development

Key themes

- It isn't enough to give people a digital device. People **need to understand how to use the device and have access to reliable internet at home**

- **Demand outstrips the supply** of low-cost/free digital devices in St. Louis

- **Community anchor institutions can act as local service providers** and lead digital access in their neighborhoods

- Infrastructure projects could be tailored to local needs (e.g. **cell towers instead of fiber in parks**)

New infrastructure projects in communities that are technology deserts need to understand extent to which there is an opportunity to bring technology to communities

Interviewee

People need to be able to access devices in their communities because they may not have access to devices or the internet at home

Interviewee

We want the community to be connected with each other, strategically…need to think through how these projects connect with one another

Interviewee

Stakeholder Engagement: Digital Inclusion & Technical Support

Stakeholder and public engagement helped to validate and add nuance to the gaps and needs identified through research, the mapping analysis and need typology development

Key themes

- Digital navigators need to be accessible to residents through a variety of methods (in-person, phone, online)

- Training programs have to balance providing an education with selectivity

- Digital literacy is just one barrier to accessing digital training…**socioeconomic barriers impact peoples' ability to participate in training programs**

- A large number of stakeholders are pursuing their own projects that involve digital inclusion issues (e.g. digital literacy, device distribution, etc.), **but there needs to be living platform to map and coordinate these efforts**

People need more than one-time assistance or training on how to use devices, people need on-going access to digital navigators

Interviewee

Classes should be about introducing things to students outside the norm…taking apart an old school camera…gaining a deeper understanding of that

Interviewee

Some staff themselves do not have digital literacy…work could be done to train staff and create more targeted programming for clients

Interviewee

Stakeholder Engagement: Funding and Implementation

Stakeholder and public engagement helped to validate and add nuance to the gaps and needs identified through research, the mapping analysis and need typology development

Key themes

- **Need for better coordination among the City, SLPL, SLPS, and external stakeholders** around expanding public internet access, devices, and digital inclusion & technical support programs

- **Funding challenges exist across many stakeholders** and the end of COVID-19 has exacerbated these issues across the City

City needs to have dedicated staff and sustained funding on digital inclusion to drive these issues

Interviewee

City needs to bring together the schools, libraries, and external stakeholders to coordinate projects and efforts

Interviewee

External partners need someone inside the City government to understand how the project works, need a project people can buy into, and need someone dedicated to implement

Interviewee

Community Meetings & Neighborhood Associations

| Meeting Type	Meeting Location	Address	Date	Time
Community Meeting	St. Louis Public Library – Baden Branch	8448 Church Dr, 63147	Monday, 5/1/23	6:00pm
Community Meeting	Boys & Girls Club	2901 N Grand Blvd, 6310	Tuesday, 5/2/23	6:00pm
Community Meeting	Wesley House Association (Senior Center)	4507 E Lee Ave, 63115	Tuesday, 5/2/23	11am
Community Meeting	Delmar DivINe	5501 Delmar Blvd, 63112	Wednesday, 5/3/23	6:00pm
Community Meeting	Marquette Center	4025 Minnesota Ave, 63118	Thursday, 5/4/23	6:00pm
Community Meeting	Virtual Meeting	Online	Friday, 5/5/23	6:00pm
Community Meeting	Wohl Center	1515 Kingshighway Blvd, 63113	Saturday, 5/6/23	2:00pm
Neighborhood Association	North Side Action Group	1525 Orchid Ave, 63147	Saturday, 5/13/23	10am
Neighborhood Association	St. Louis Place Association		Thursday, 5/18/23	6:30pm
Neighborhood Association	Kingsway East Neighborhood Meeting	TBD		

Community Meeting & Neighborhood Association Overview
- Meeting Publicity Efforts: Guidehouse and Metropolitan Strategies & Solutions promoted the community meetings through emails to engaged stakeholders, digital & physical flyers, and door-to-door outreach in relevant neighborhoods
- Meeting Locations: Community meeting locations were selected based on whether the neighborhood had high digital inclusion needs
- Individuals Reached: ~47 community attendees total and 4 community outreach staff attended each of the community meetings, ~65 neighborhoods association meeting attendees

Community Meeting & Neighborhood Association Takeaways

Key themes from meetings & neighborhood associations
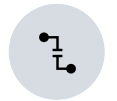
Broadband Access & Affordability

- **Desire for more internet options at a lower-cost and also with more consistent service.** Belief that existing services are too expensive and have outages. People on fixed incomes struggle to pay for the internet. People feel there is a disconnect between advertised service speeds (in commercials) and actual offerings. There is support for increased competition.
- **Broadband access reflects broader neighborhood divides.** One resident reflected that "everywhere that makes money has high speed internet…those that don't have to schools, libraries, and other places." Access and affordability issues are persistent throughout North City.

Public Device & Internet Access

- **Existing Device Distribution Programs (e.g. Hotspots & Chromebook) from SLPL are popular**. Residents expressed support for existing programs and wanted them to continue.
- **Citywide WiFi should be the ultimate goal according to some.** Several residents viewed hotspots and similar services as a "bandaid" solution and that city-run network is the solution.
- **Additional places to access the internet**. Several attendees expressed support for additional public WiFi in public spaces (e.g. parks) with other elements like public solar charging stations. Similarly, other residents saw community institutions like Churches as potential internet hubs in their community.

Digital Inclusion & Technical Support

- **Some locations are viewed as digital deserts.** Community members wanted more digital services in their neighborhoods. They expressed support for computer labs, help-desks, and other services.
- **Seniors are wary of digital services and need additional support to access digital services.** From applying to benefits to reading the news, many seniors are disconnected from digital services. Several seniors only had the internet because of the needs of others in their households.
- **Support is key for residents.** "Customer service" from service providers is key to access issues.

Funding & Implementation

- **Leadership must come from the City.** Good civic and governmental leadership is key to bringing together stakeholders and addressing these issues.
- **Need for innovation and entrepreneurship to solve the digital divide.** Government agencies have a capacity issue to solve problems and solving the digital divide will involve significant innovation.

Respondent Demographics (1/5)

Q1 - Are you answering this survey from the perspective of a St. Louis City resident, business, or community organization? (n=309)

Category	Percentage
Community organization	3.88%
Business	6.80%
City resident	89.32%
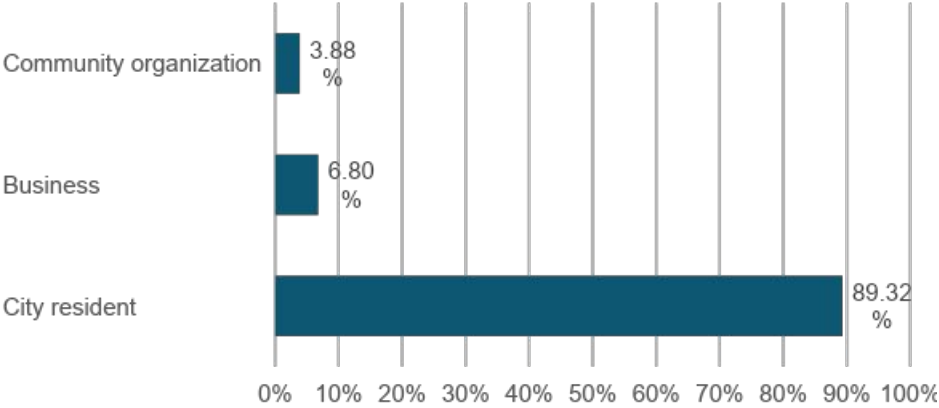
Zipcode (Q22)	Number of residents (n=126)
63118	21
63113	20
63115	11
63116	10
63108	8
63147	8
63111	7
63112	5
63139	5
63104	4
63107	4
63109	4

Zipcode	Number
63110	3
63120	3
63033	2
63102	2
63106	2
62118	1
63010	1
63101	1
63103	1
63119	1
63133	1
63301	1

Respondent Demographics (2/5)

Q23 - What gender do you identify with? (n=246)

Category	Percentage
I prefer not to say	0.81%
A gender identity not listed:	
Nonbinary	1.22%
Transgender Male	0.41%
Transgender Female	
Male	37.80%
Female	59.76%
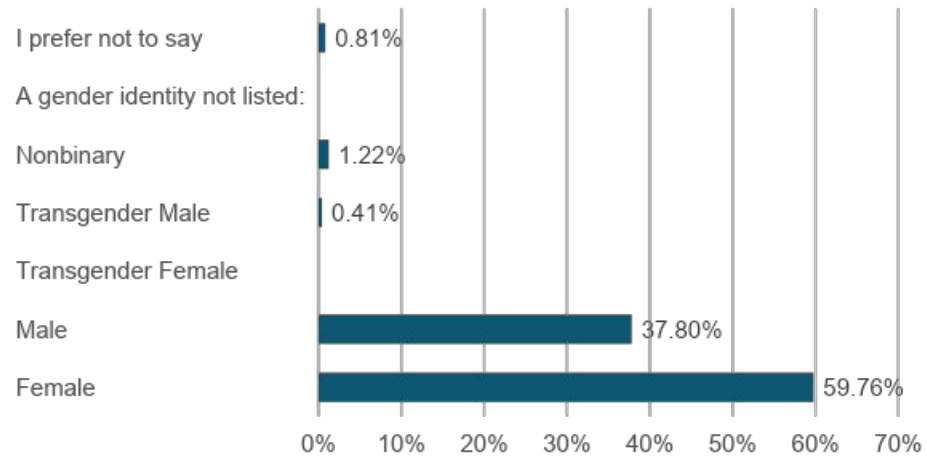
Q27 - How many children under 18 live in your household? (n=204)

Number	Percentage
5	3.43%
4	5.88%
3	11.27%
2	14.71%
1	16.67%
0	48.04%

Respondent Demographics (3/5)
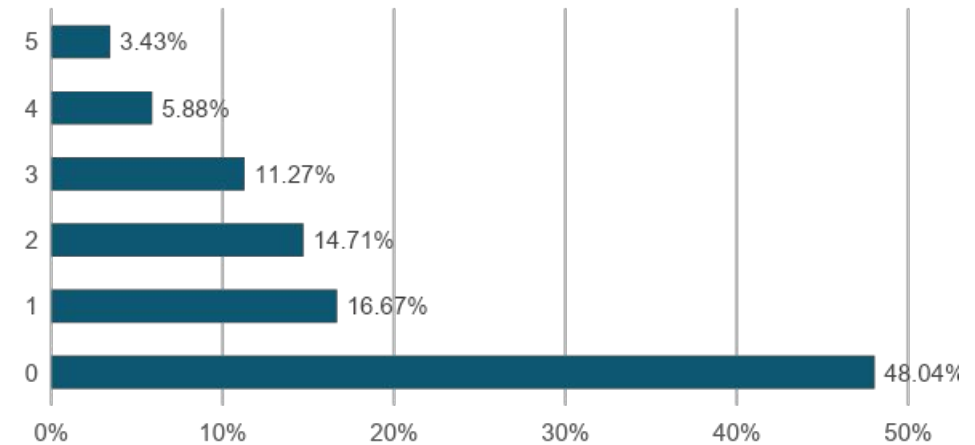
Q29 - Is English the primary language spoken at home? (n=225)
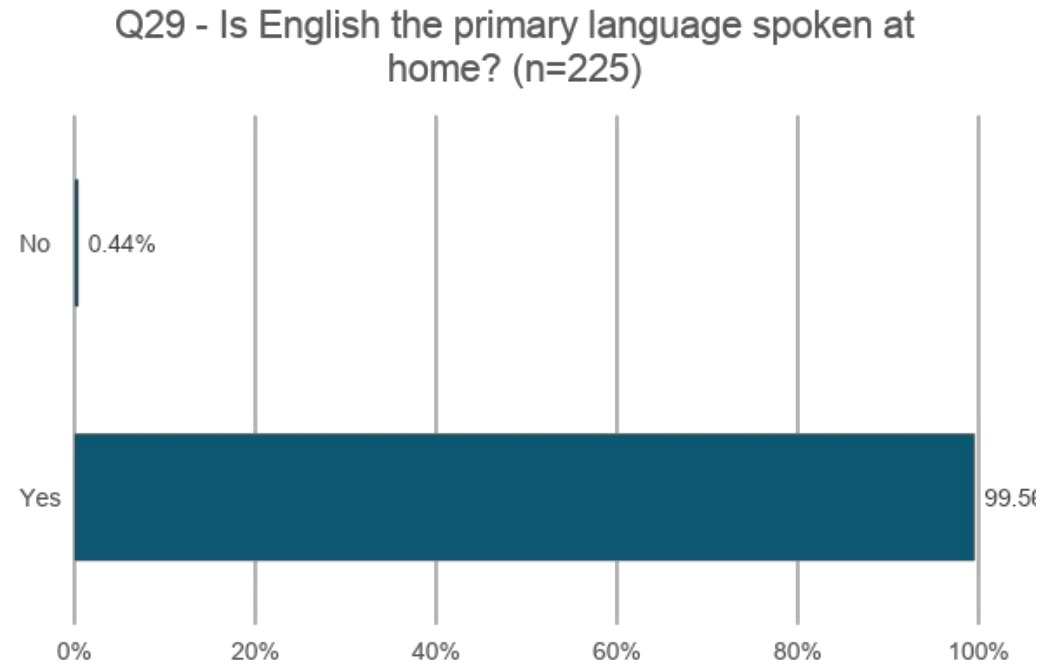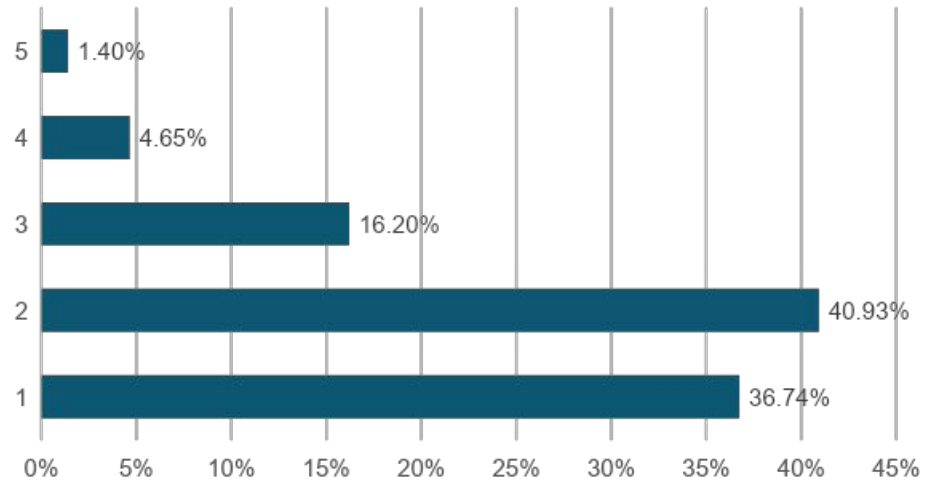
Respondent Demographics (4/5)

Q30 - What is your household income? (n=217)

Income	Percent
$200,000 or more	3.23%
$150,000 to $199,999	1.84%
$100,000 to $149,999	6.91%
$75,000 to $99,999	8.76%
$50,000 to $74,999	23.04%
$35,000 to $49,999	20.28%
$25,000 to $34,999	11.06%
$15,000 to $24,999	7.37%
$10,000 to $14,999	7.83%
Less than $10,000	9.68%
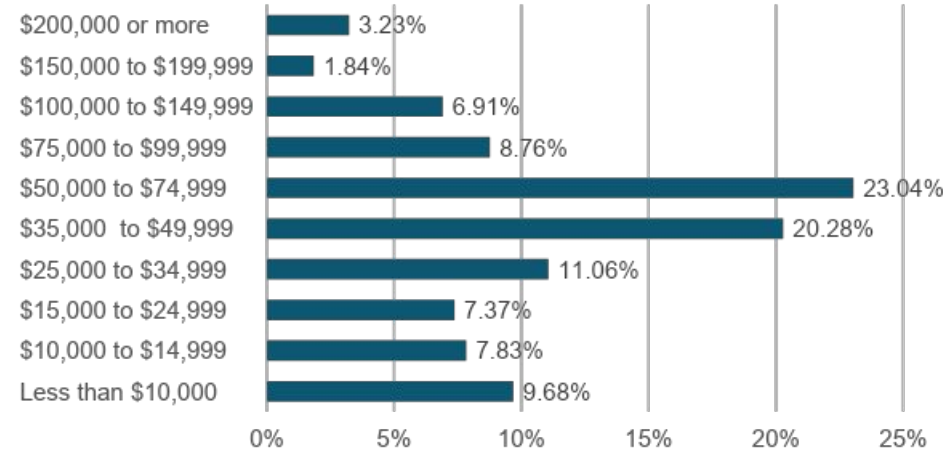
Q31 - What is your highest level of school completed? (n=212)

Education	Percent
Professional degree beyond a Master's degree	3.77%
Master's degree	14.15%
Bachelor's degree	21.23%
Associate's degree	9.91%
Some college	14.15%
High school diploma (or GED)	25.00%
Less than high school	11.79%
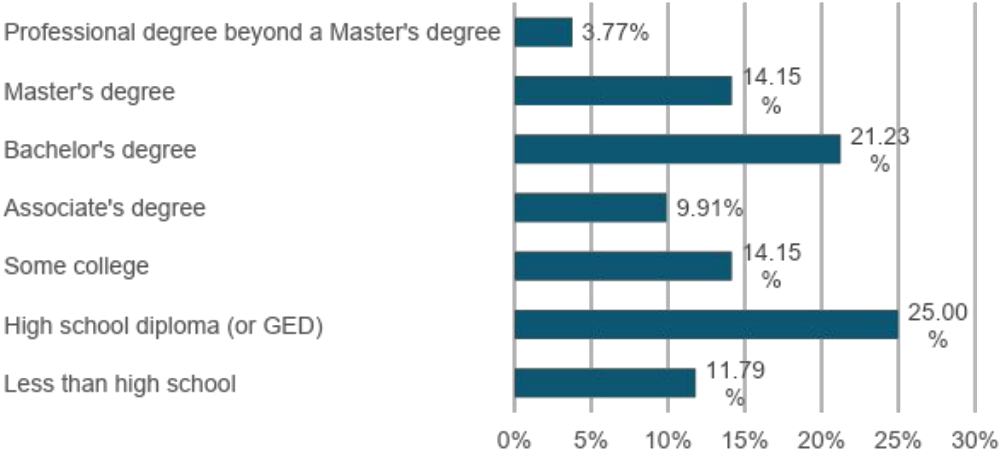
Respondent Demographics (5/5)

3	1.12%
2	6.18%
1	24.72%
0	67.98%
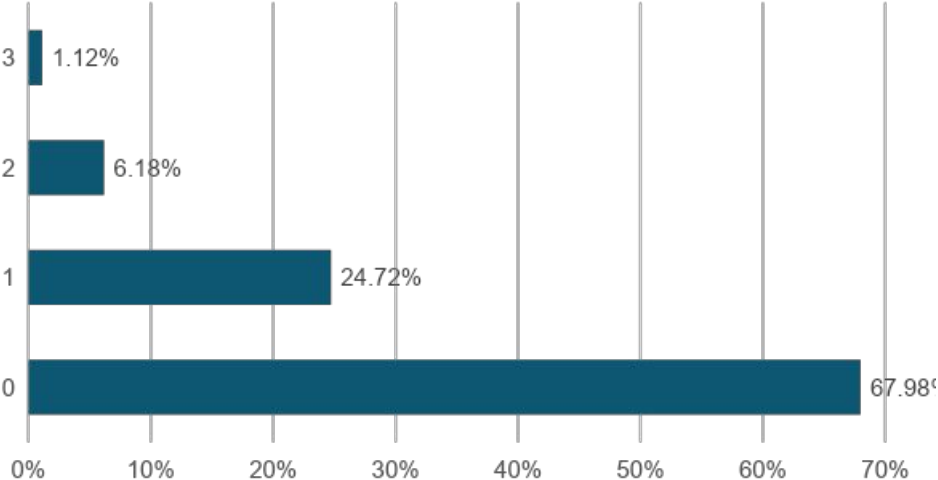
Q24 - Which of the following best describes
you? (select all that apply) (n=251)

Other	0.40%
Prefer not to say	3.19%
White or Caucasian	22.31%
Native American or Alaskan Native	0.80%
Hispanic or Latino	2.79%
Black or African American	68.53%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1.99%
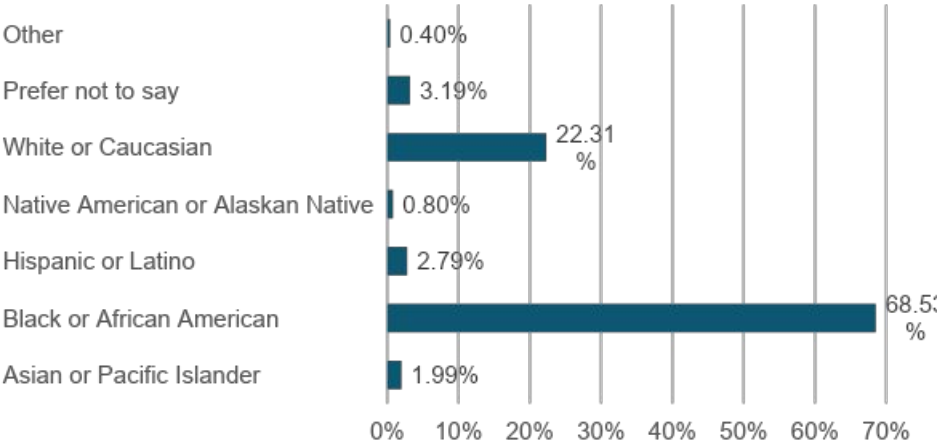
How do respondents currently access the internet? (1/8)

Q3 - Do you have internet access (WiFi) at home?
(home internet and/or through a wireless cellular plan)
(n=265)

Category	Percentage
...ave any internet access at home	5.66%
...wireless cellular plan only	10.19%
...home internet subscription only	18.49%
...home internet subscription and wireless cellular plan	65.66%
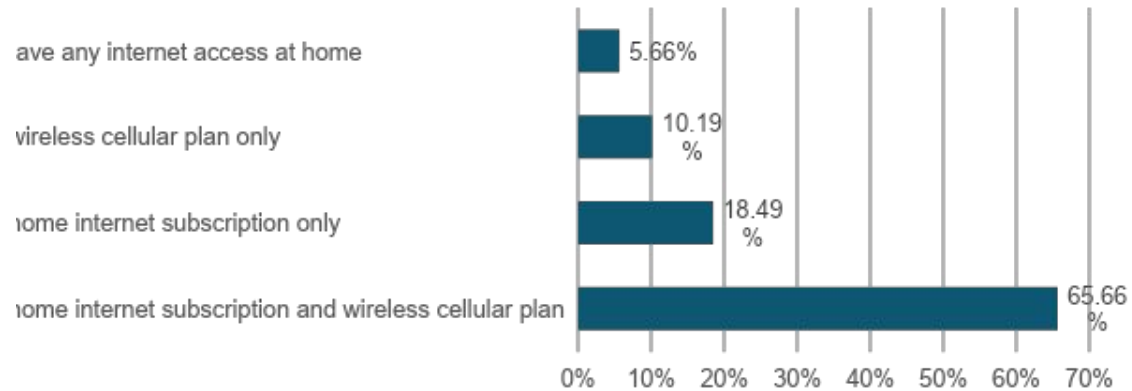
How do respondents currently access the internet? (2/8)

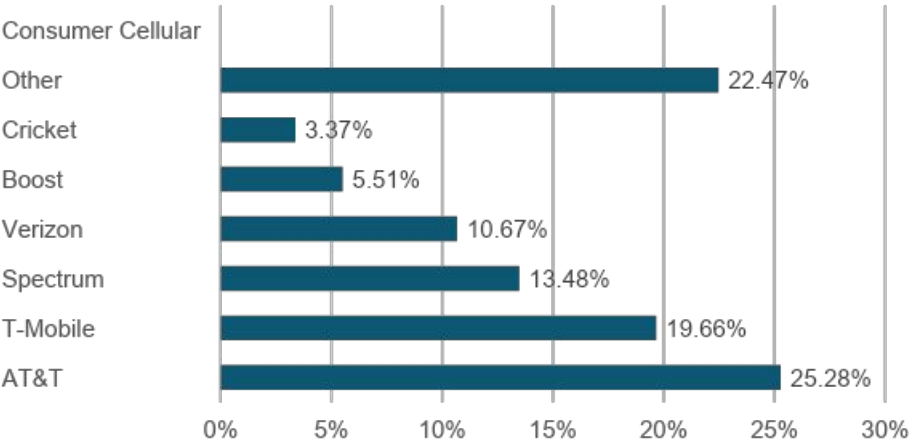Q6 - What is the name of your wireless cellular plan provider/plan? (n=178)

Provider	Number of residents (n=178)
AT&T	45
T-Mobile	35
Spectrum	24
Verizon	19
Boost	9
Cricket	6
Consumer Cellular	5
Charter	4
Metro PCS	4
Simple	4
Metro T-Mobile	3
Sprint	3
Metro	2

Mint Mobile	2
Sprint/T-Mobile	2
Assurance	2
GoogleFi	1
Government Assurance	1
H20	1
Internet 300	1
Safelink	1
Qlink Wireless	1
TruConnect	1
Ultra Mobile	1
Xfinity	1

How do respondents currently access the internet? (3/8)
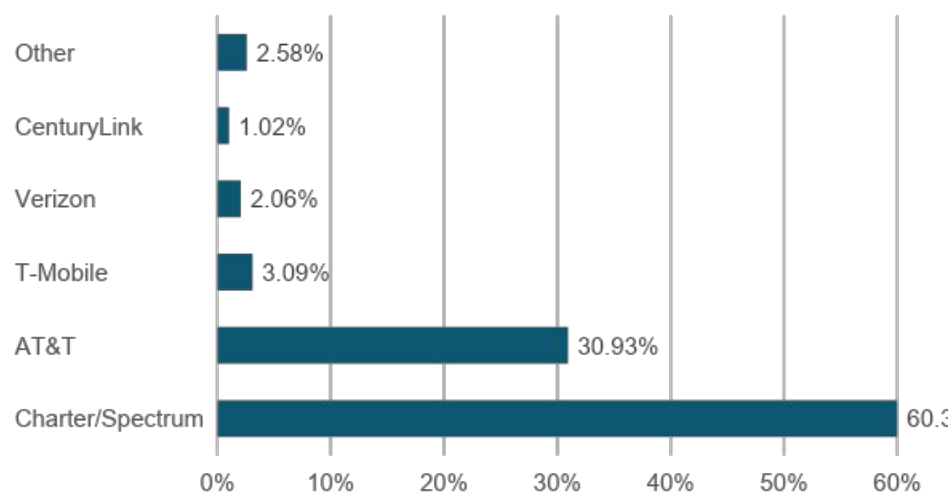
Provider name	Number of residents (n=194)
Charter/Spectrum	117
AT&T	60
T-Mobile	6
Verizon	4
CenturyLink	2
Brown Dog	1
Government Assurance	1
Optimum	1
Solis	1
St. Louis City	1

How do respondents currently access the internet? (4/8)

Q2 - Do you have internet access (WiFi) at your business or organization's location? (internet service and/or through a wireless cellular plan) (n=28)

- y internet access at my business or organization's location
- cellular plan only — 10.71%
- cial internet subscription only — 32.14%
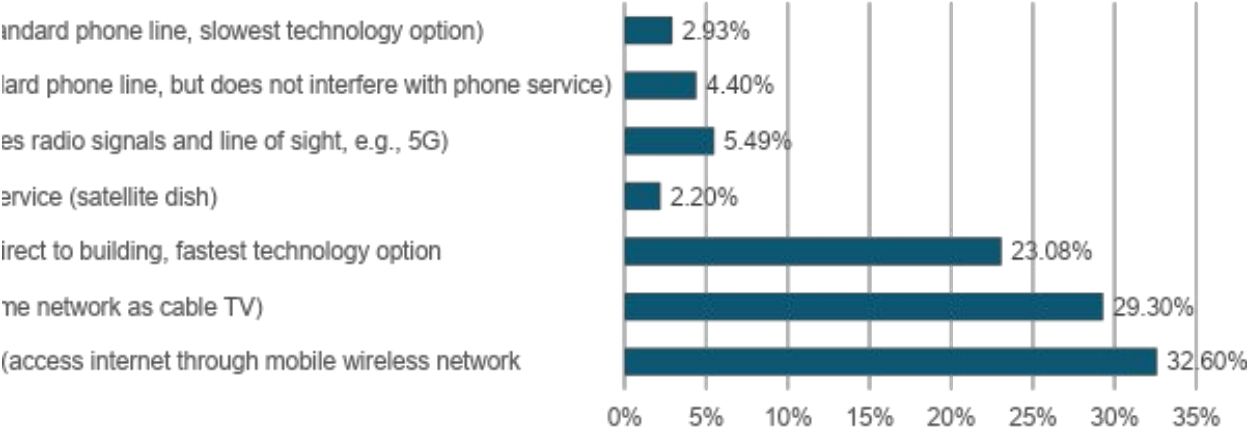- cial internet subscription and wireless cellular plan — 57.14%
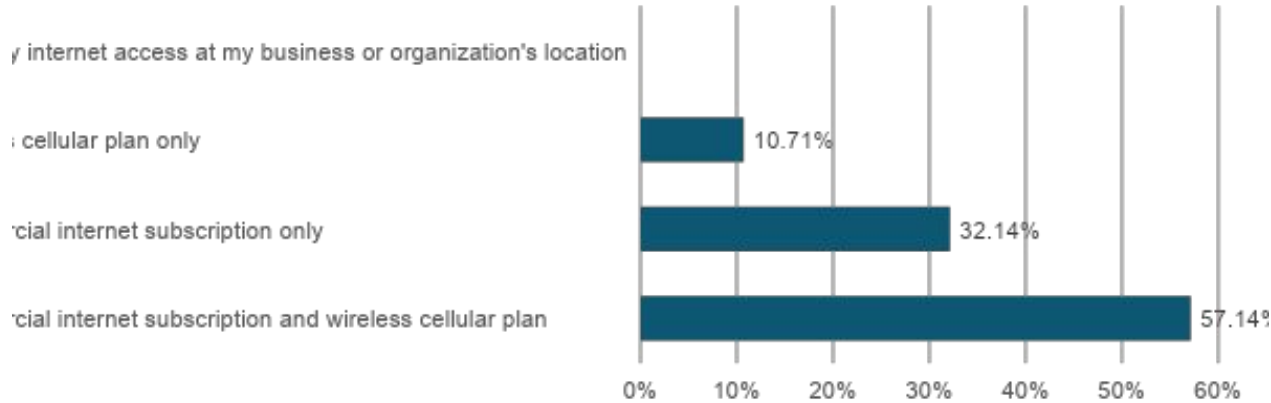
Q4 - How do you access the internet at your business or organization's location? (select all that apply) (n=29)

- e, but does not interfere with phone service) — 3.45%
- 17.24%
- f sight, e.g., 5G internet) — 13.79%
- t technology option)
- 3.45%
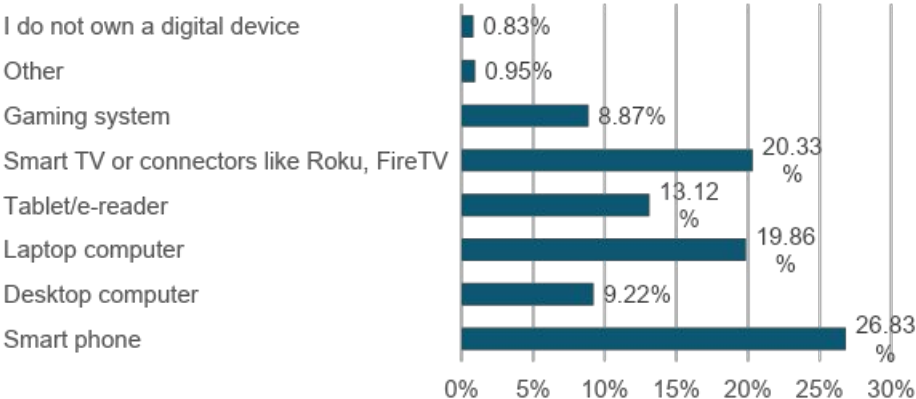- chnology option) — 31.03%
- 6.90%
- nobile wireless network) — 24.14%
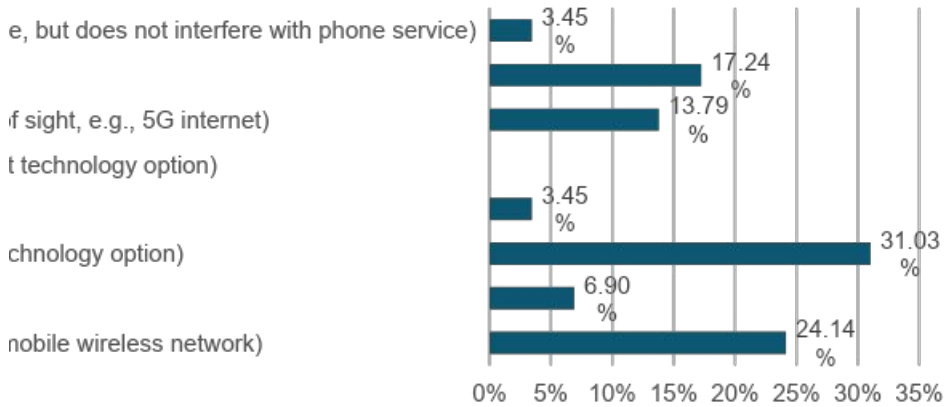
How do respondents currently access the internet? (5/8)

Q5 - How do you access the internet at home? (select all that apply) (n=273)

Option	Percentage
...ndard phone line, slowest technology option)	2.93%
...lard phone line, but does not interfere with phone service)	4.40%
...es radio signals and line of sight, e.g., 5G)	5.49%
...ervice (satellite dish)	2.20%
...irect to building, fastest technology option	23.08%
...ne network as cable TV)	29.30%
...(access internet through mobile wireless network	32.60%

Q16 - What digital devices do you use to access the internet? (Check all that apply) (n=846)

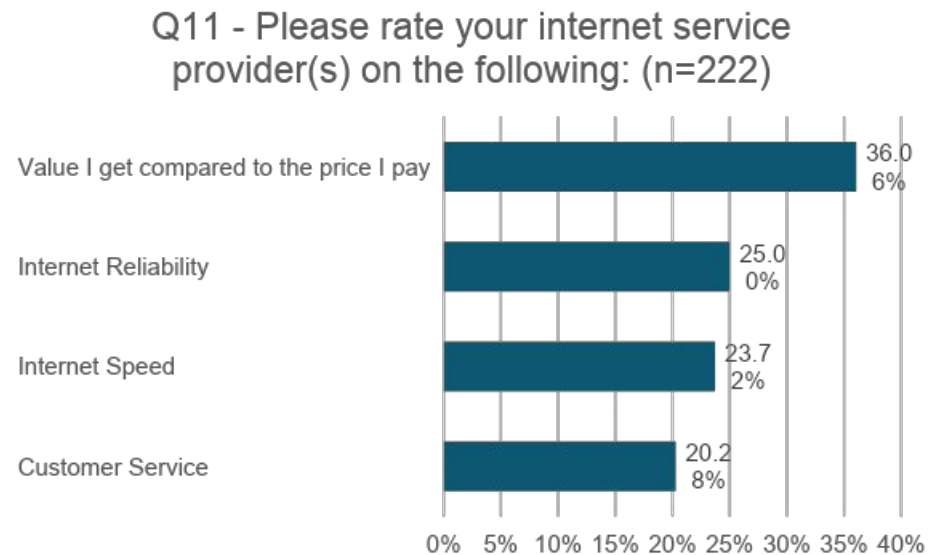| Device	Percentage
I do not own a digital device	0.83%
Other	0.95%
Gaming system	8.87%
Smart TV or connectors like Roku, FireTV	20.33%
Tablet/e-reader	13.12%
Laptop computer	19.86%
Desktop computer	9.22%
Smart phone	26.83%

How do respondents currently access the internet? (6/8)

Q18 - Where do you most frequently access internet outside of your home? (n=160)

Location	Percentage
Other	2.50%
Restaurant/coffee shop	5.00%
Someone else's home	13.75%
My work location	39.38%
Other public buildings or spaces	3.75%
School	3.13%
Community/Recreation Center	2.50%
Public Library	30.00%
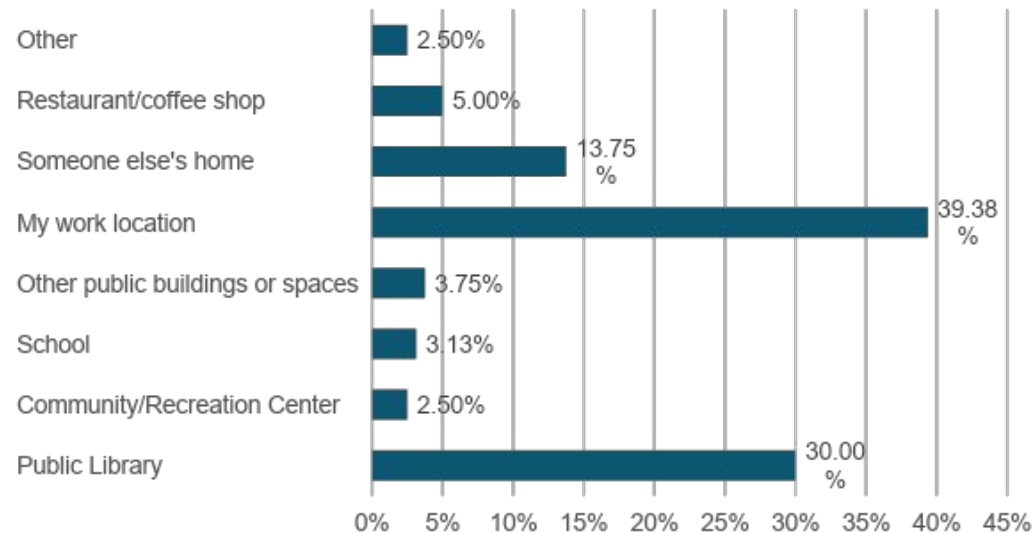
- **When asked to rank the locations most frequently used to access the internet, this chart denotes respondents' most frequent source**
- 39.38% of respondents answered that the most frequent place that they access the internet outside of their own home is at work
- This is followed by 30% of respondents answering their public library is their first external source

How do respondents currently access the internet? (7/8)

Q11 - Please rate your internet service provider(s) on the following: (n=222)

Category	Value
Value I get compared to the price I pay	36.06%
Internet Reliability	25.00%
Internet Speed	23.72%
Customer Service	20.28%

0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40%

- Respondents were asked to mark their experiences with their internet provider as either "satisfied" or "dissatisfied"
- **This chart denotes the "dissatisfied" responses**
- 36.06% of respondents answered that they are dissatisfied with the value they get compared to the price they pay
- This is followed by 25% of respondents being dissatisfied with their internet reliability

How do respondents currently access the internet? (8/8)

| Q22 - How does using the internet impact your business or organization?	It's vital and imperative
	It's the basis of the business
	A lot
	All business transactions and correspondence rely on our internet provider
	Claims billing, financial statements, banking, telephony system, communicating with clients and attendants are all done via the internet
	It shuts down production
	A lot
	We use it to run card sales and stream music in the shop
	I definitely need it to run my real estate business
	It's the main resource to connect with consumers and investors about the organization
	Ensures a consistent flow of operations.

*open ended question

Experiences with current service

Q12 - Do you have a cap on monthly internet usage from your internet service provider (ISP) or cellular service provider? (n=239)
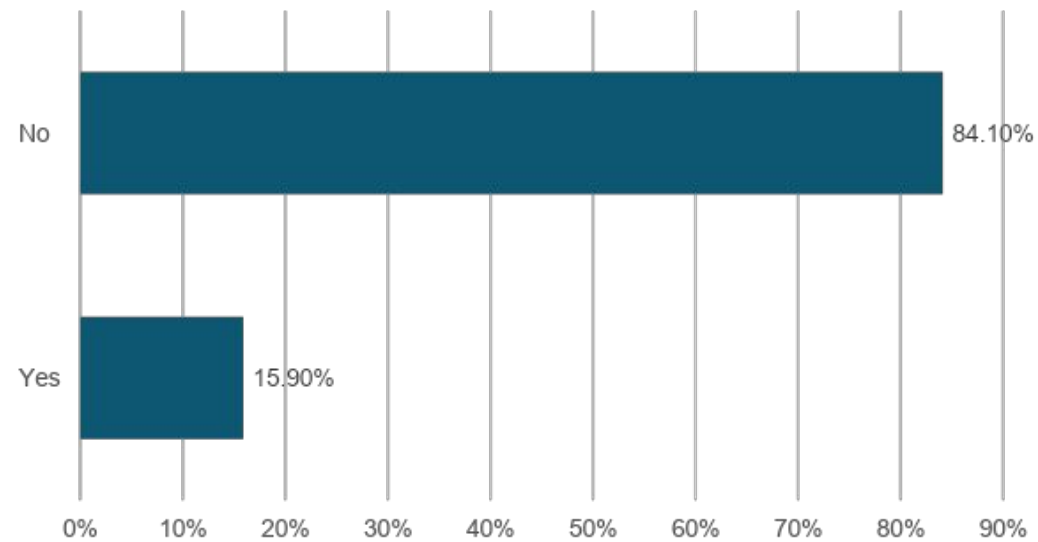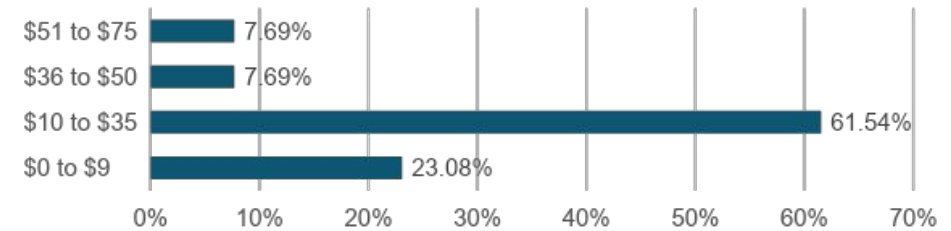
Pricing (1/2)

Q9 - How much do you currently pay for internet service per month (internet service to location, NOT cellular plan)? (n=215)

$101 to $125	7.44%
$76 to $100	20.00%
$51 to $75	45.58%
$36 to $50	16.74%
$0 to $35	10.23%
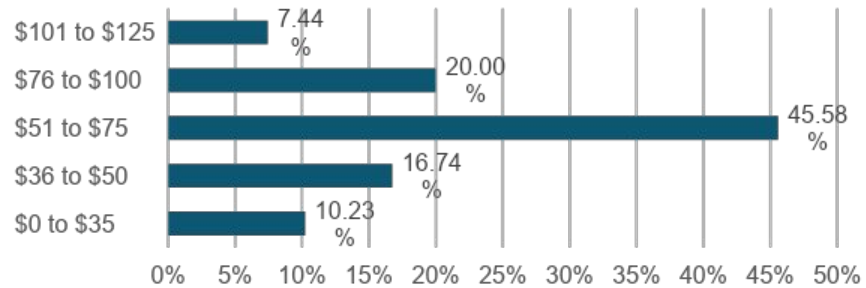
Q13 - How much would you be willing to pay for internet service per month (internet service to location NOT cellular plan)? (n=13)

$51 to $75	7.69%
$36 to $50	7.69%
$10 to $35	61.54%
$0 to $9	23.08%

Pricing (2/2)

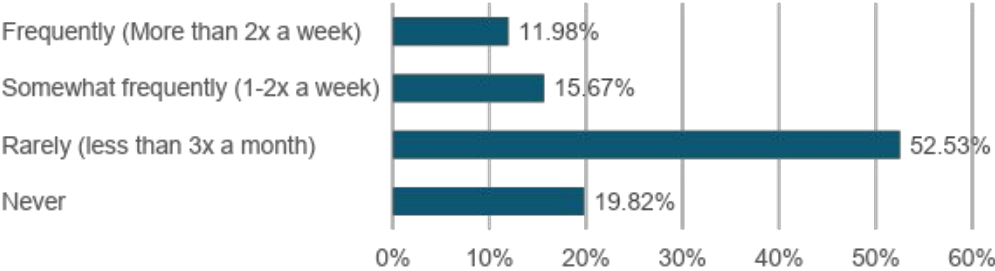Q10 - Would you be willing to pay more for better internet service? (n=215)
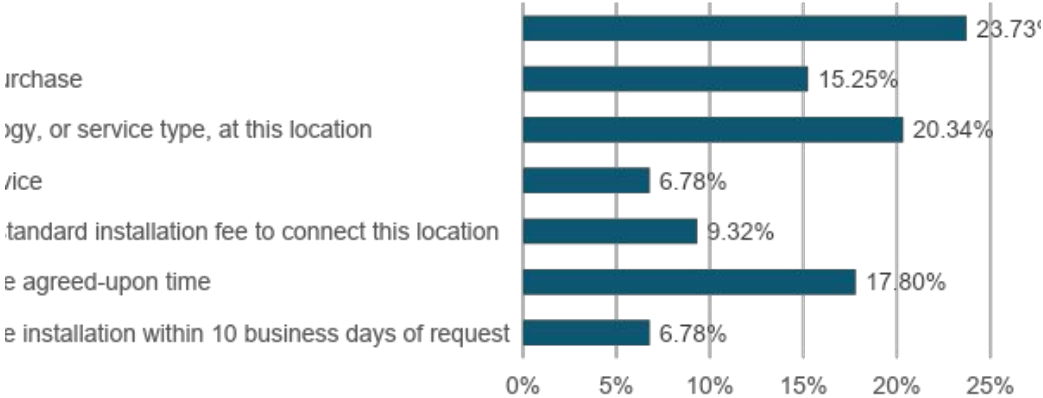
No — 71.16%

Yes — 28.84%
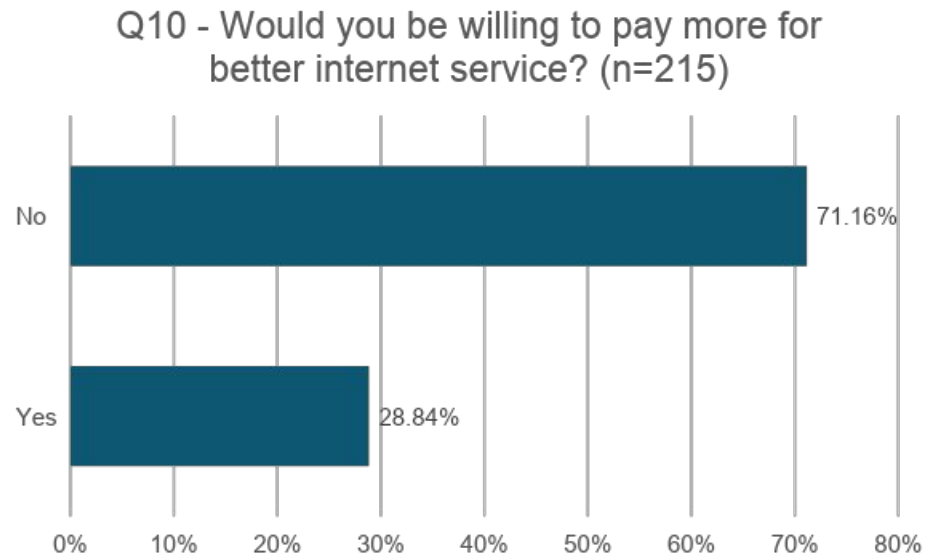
Current issues with internet (1/2)

Q8 - How often do you experience disruptions or slower than expected download/upload speeds? (n=217)

Response	Percentage
Frequently (More than 2x a week)	11.98%
Somewhat frequently (1-2x a week)	15.67%
Rarely (less than 3x a month)	52.53%
Never	19.82%

Q14 - Have you experienced any of the following issues trying to get internet? (select all that apply) (n=118)

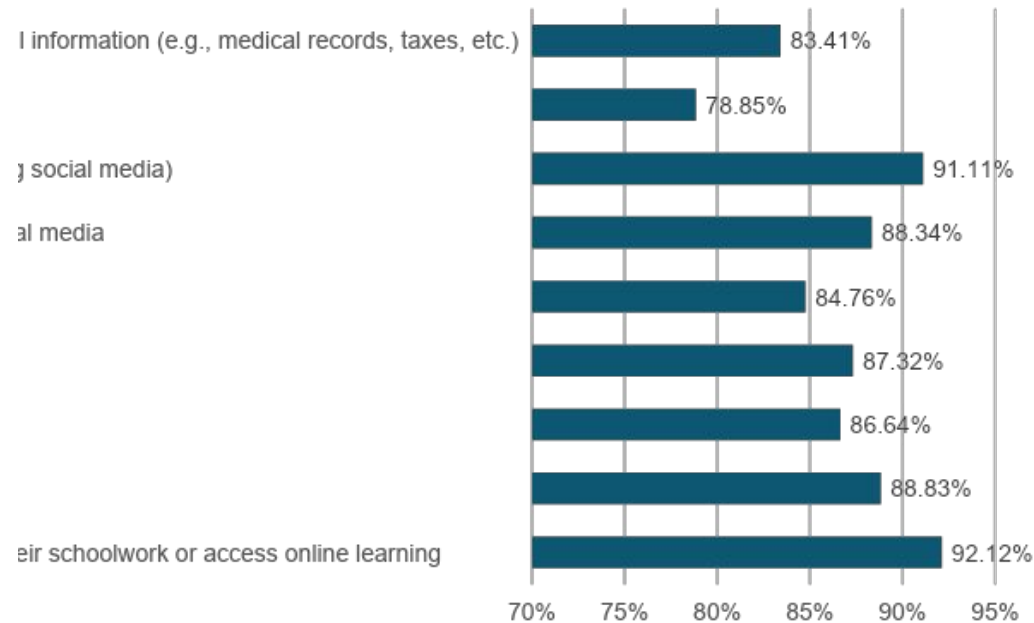| Issue	Percentage
...rchase	23.73%
...gy, or service type, at this location	15.25%
...vice	20.34%
...tandard installation fee to connect this location	6.78%
...e agreed-upon time	9.32%
...e installation within 10 business days of request	17.80%
	6.78%

Issues with internet currently (2/2)

Q15 - What is the main reason why you do not have internet access at your location? (n=36)

Reason	Percentage
Other (please explain)	13.89%
Concerns about online privacy and security	
I use the internet somewhere else	11.11%
Too expensive	52.78%
My device does not connect	2.78%
Internet speed is too slow	11.11%
Not available in my area	2.78%
Don't see the need for it	5.56%
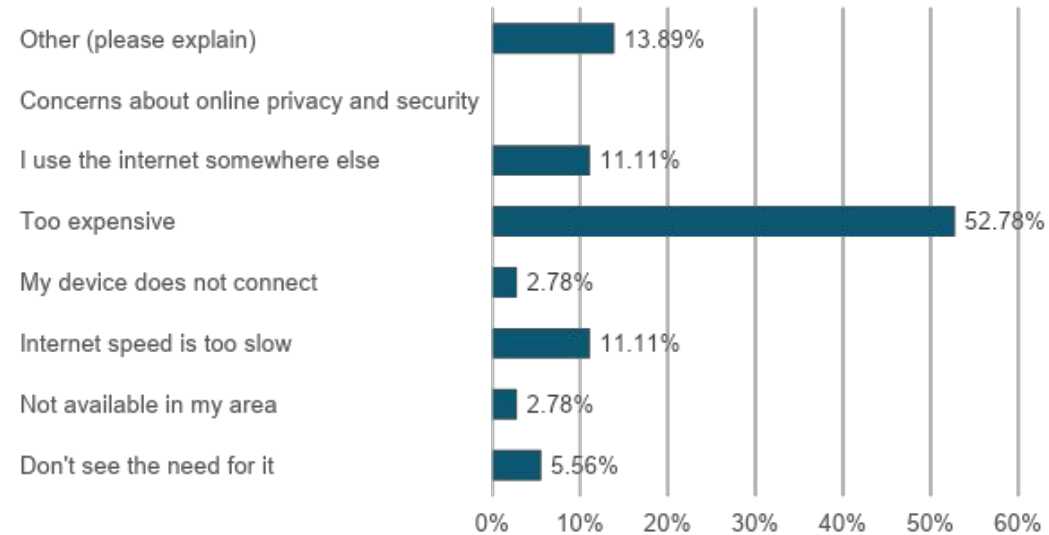
Current comfort level with digital devices

Q17 - How comfortable are you using digital devices to do the following tasks?

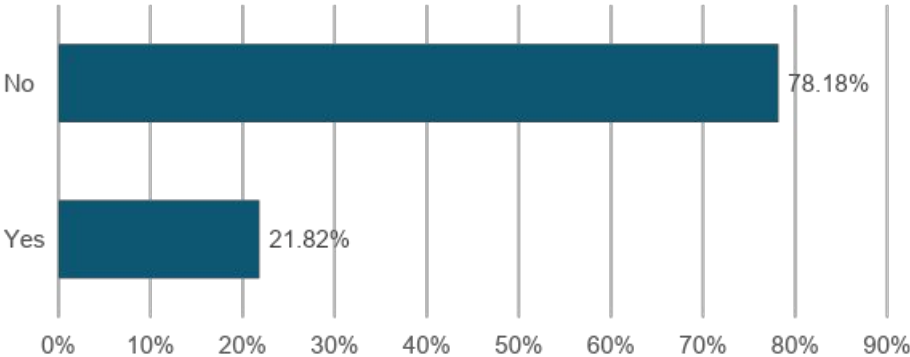| Task	Percentage
l information (e.g., medical records, taxes, etc.)	83.41%
	78.85%
g social media)	91.11%
al media	88.34%
	84.76%
	87.32%
	86.64%
	88.83%
eir schoolwork or access online learning	92.12%

- Respondents were asked to mark their comfort with using digital devices as either "comfortable" or "uncomfortable"
- **This chart denotes the "comfortable" responses**
- 92.12% of respondents answered that they are comfortable helping children in their household complete schoolwork
- Meanwhile, only 78.85% of respondents are comfortable attending virtual doctor's appointments

Experience using Lifeline or ACP

Q19 - Have you ever applied for any of the following programs (eligibility based on income or qualification for other social benefit program)? (choose all that apply)

- ograms — 66.67%
- 17.12%
- 1.80%
- CP) (previously FCC Emergency Broadband Benefit) — 7.66%
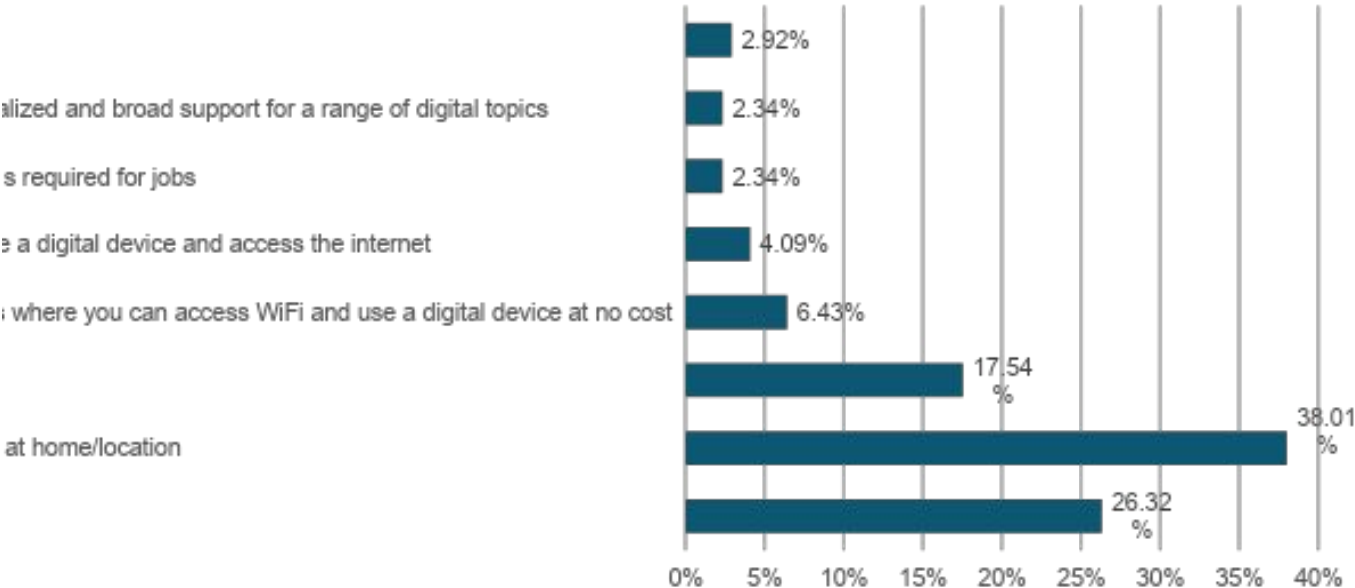- 6.76%

(0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%)
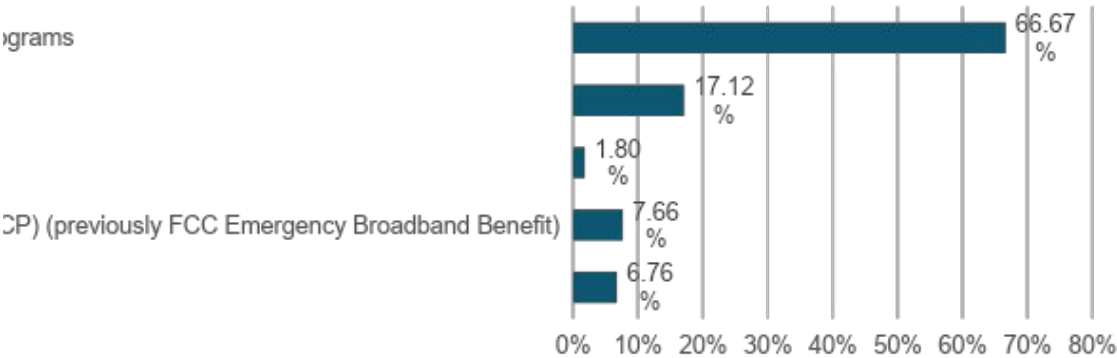
Q20 - Did you need assistance applying to FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program, Lifeline Program, or other benefit program referenced in the previous question? (n=55)

- No — 78.18%
- Yes — 21.82%

(0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90%)

Desired programs

Q21 - What programs or resources would you like to have available? (n=171)

Category	%
	2.92%
...alized and broad support for a range of digital topics	2.34%
...s required for jobs	2.34%
...e a digital device and access the internet	4.09%
...s where you can access WiFi and use a digital device at no cost	6.43%
	17.54%
...at home/location	38.01%
	26.32%

- Respondents were asked to rank their preferences of resources available
- **When asked to rank their preferences of resources available, this chart denotes respondents' most preferred resource**
- 38% of respondents answered that they would most like to have low or no-cost internet service at home/location
- This is followed by 26% of respondents answering their most preferred resources would be low or no-cost digital devices