



KNX News Radio Los Angeles

Story by City News Service
January 3, 2024

Study Reveals Broadband Access In California Remains High

Roughly 91% of California households have access to high-speed internet at home, roughly the same rate as 2021, but there was a drop in broadband access in households with school-aged children, according to a study released Monday by USC and the California Emerging Technology Fund.

"There was significant progress in reducing the number of under-connected households," Hernán Galperin, the study's lead researcher and a professor at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, said in a statement. "However, our latest data also point to the sobering reality of the challenges in reaching the most digitally disadvantaged households."

According to the study, the percentage of under-connected households -- those with only a smartphone -- was cut in half from 6% in 2021 to 3% this year.

But the report noted a dropoff in broadband access for households with school-age children, falling from 97% in 2021 to 93% in 2021. The report's authors attributed to the drop to an end of pandemic-era school programs that provided internet service for families to accommodate online learning.

Likely for the same reason, the percentage of children who had a non- shared desktop, laptop or tablet computer available for school activities fell from 95% in 2021 to 72% this year, according to the report.

The report found improvements in broadband access among several "disadvantaged" groups, such as households with disabilities, in which access jumped from 83% in 2021 to 91% in 2023. Among households with adults aged 60 and older, access increased from 78% in 2021 to 90% in 2023, while among adults without a high-school degree, access went from 64% in 2021 to 79% this year.

"We now know we still have some miles to go for Californians to achieve full adoption," Sunne Wright McPeak, president and CEO of CETF, said in a statement. "The survey confirms that affordability remains the major barrier to broadband adoption and underscores the need to ensure that low- income households always will have affordable home internet service available to them.*"