

RURAL BROADBAND ACCESS AND COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

Experts agree that significant disparities to broadband access exist between rural and urban communities. Over 31 percent of rural Americans do not have access to high-speed broadband compared to 4 percent of urban Americans. In addition, according to a [Free Press analysis](#)¹ of the 2014 FCC Form 477 broadband deployment, **27% of people of color in rural areas are unserved.**

Rural broadband policies must address affordability. Below are a few ways this issue can be addressed:

- Congress and the FCC should support and expand the Lifeline Assistance Program to provide low-income families with a communications subsidy for broadband access.
- Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in rural areas should expand and eliminate enrollment barriers to discount internet offers for low-income communities.
- ISPs should deploy high-speed, reliable, and quality broadband in rural communities so they can fully participate in a 21st-century society.

Poverty in rural communities of color is greater than white rural communities. Issues of broadband affordability impact these communities at a greater rate.²

- According to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#), 27.2% (more than 1 in 4) of the Black community in rural areas live in poverty.
- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 24.4% (almost 1 in 4) of the Latinx community in rural areas live in poverty.
- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 30.6 % (almost 1 in 3) of the Indigenous community in rural areas live in poverty.
- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 22.5% (more than 1 in 5) of the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander community in rural areas live in poverty.
- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 11.8% (more than 1 in 10) of the white community living in rural areas live in poverty.

FCC broadband deployment data must be more inclusive to address the digital divide that occurs among intersectional demographics:

- Under Section 706 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996³, the FCC has a statutory mandate to report whether telecommunications capability “is being deployed to all Americans in a reasonable and timely fashion.”
- The digital divide disproportionately impacts people of color, particularly in rural America. The FCC should collect and report demographic data including including race, ethnicity, gender, income, and education-level in its annual [Broadband Deployment Report](#)⁴ as a tool to assess discrimination in deployment based on intersectional identities.

¹ Turner, S. D. (2016). Free Press. *Digital Denied: The Impact of Systemic Racial Discrimination on Home-Internet Adoption*. Retrieved from: https://www.freepress.net/sites/default/files/legacy-policy/digital_denied_free_press_report_december_2016.pdf

² Bishaw, A. & Posey, K. G. (2016). A comparison of Rural and Urban America: Household Income and Poverty. Retrieved from: https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2016/12/a_comparison_of_rura.html

³ Federal Communications Commission. (1996). Telecommunications Act of 1996. Retrieved from: <https://www.fcc.gov/general/telecommunications-act-1996>

⁴ Federal Communications Commission. (2018). 2018 Broadband Deployment Report. Retrieved from: <https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/reports/broadband-progress-reports/2018-broadband-deployment-report>

Black Rural Communities, Poverty, and Internet Access

| State | Black Population in rural areas or small towns | Overall Black State Population | Percentage of Black Community in Poverty | Internet Access: Overall State Population Underserved | Internet Access: State Comparison |
|----------------|--|--------------------------------|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| Mississippi | 39.2% | 37.8% | 32.3% | 36% | 49th most connected state |
| South Carolina | 36.4% | 26.4% | 26.4% | 20% | 28th most connected state |
| Louisiana | 31% | 32.6% | 34.2% | 21% | 36th most connected state |
| Georgia | 25.8% | 32.2% | 24.8% | 25.8% | 20th most connected state |
| Alabama | 21.9% | 26.8% | 27.4% | 26% | 41st most connected state |
| North Carolina | 20.4% | 22.2% | 26.5% | 12% | 15th most connected state |
| Virginia | 17.1% | 19.8% | 19.1% | 16% | 22nd most connected state |
| Maryland | 14.7% | 30.8% | 13.6% | 14.7% | 8th most connected state |
| Arkansas | 13.9% | 15.7% | 33.9% | 30% | 48th most connected state |

Latinx Rural Communities, Poverty, and Internet Access

| State | Latinx Population in rural areas or small towns | Overall Latinx State Population | Percentage of Latinx Community in poverty | Internet Access: Overall State Population Underserved | Internet Access: State Comparison |
|------------|---|---------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| New Mexico | 42.7% | 48.8% | 24.1% | 25% | 43rd most connected state |
| California | 36.4% | 39.1% | 19.1% | 9% | 9th most connected state |
| Texas | 31.8% | 39.4% | 22.8% | 20% | 30th most connected state |
| Arizona | 23.5% | 31.4% | 23.5% | 20% | 29th most connected state |
| Colorado | 18.9% | 21.5% | 19.4% | 14% | 23rd most connected state |
| New Jersey | 18% | 20.4% | 21.2% | 3% | 1st most connected state |
| Washington | 16.9% | 12.7% | 20.6% | 9% | 14th most connected state |
| Nevada | 16.1% | 28.8% | 19% | 11% | 19th most connected state |
| Florida | 14.7% | 25.6% | 18.9% | 14% | 10th most connected state |
| Idaho | 12.4% | 12.5% | 22.1% | 21% | 37th most connected state |