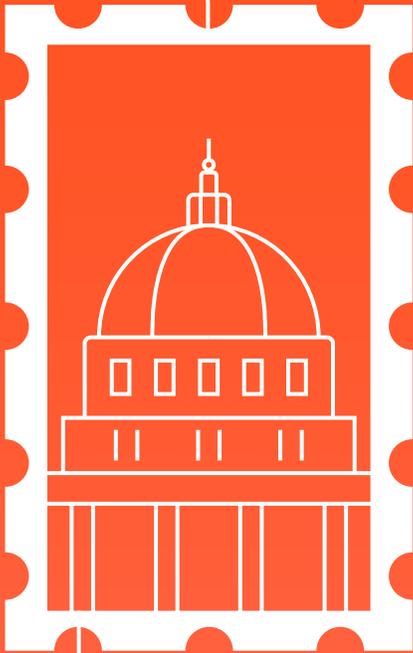


PENNSYLVANIA

POPULATION: 12.80 MILLION
67 COUNTIES AND 1 CONSOLIDATED CITY-COUNTY GOVERNMENT



A [November 2020 study](#) sponsored by The Center for Rural Pennsylvania concluded that “[u]rban and rural respondents are receiving systematically inequitable service – not only in terms of broadband speed, but also in the price for service.”

Local officials may be surprised to learn that the FCC found that 12.3 of 12.8 Pennsylvania residents statewide (95.9%) had access to a fixed broadband connection at 25/3 Mbps. They would agree that connectivity in rural Pennsylvania continues to lag behind urban access. Surprisingly, the FCC evaluated 2.7 million people in rural areas and found that 2.4 million people (86.7%) have access to fixed broadband connections. It also found that 9.9 of 10.1 urban residents (98.4%) had access to a fixed broadband connection at minimum speeds.

[The Pennsylvania Department of Economic and Community Development](#) makes a broadband map available that includes FCC data for fixed and mobile providers. Pennsylvania law sets the state’s minimum broadband speeds at 1.544 Mbps/128 Kbps, significantly lower than the national threshold of 25/3 Mbps. The Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission imposes availability requirements on regulated carriers that they provide broadband service within 10 business days of a request.

[Penn State Extension](#) also makes a map of the FCC’s Form 477 data available and includes data census block group level data about service prices, and the locations of existing structure, including transmission lines, substations, and tower data. In 2019, [Penn State researchers](#) investigated the validity of broadband availability data and found that broadband speeds and availability are much lower than data suggest. Further supporting this research, Microsoft’s November 2019 data show that approximately [6.2 million people](#) in Pennsylvania do not use the Internet at

broadband speeds.

In September 2020, the Joint State Government Commission released a detailed 200 page [report](#) outlining the background of broadband availability in the state and recommendations for improving broadband access and adoption rates in Pennsylvania. Four annual reports are expected to follow.

The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania placed [broadband expansion](#) as its number two priority for 2021. A Joint State Government Commission study on broadband pricing found that around \$60 a month is what rural residents are willing to pay for service.

In August 2020, the Philadelphia Federal Reserve [released a report](#) on broadband access, computer use, and labor market attachment in Philadelphia. The report found that around 47% of people living in low and moderate-income tracts have home broadband subscriptions, 47% of households in predominantly Latinx neighborhoods and 52% of households in predominantly Black neighborhoods had broadband subscriptions, compared to 76% of households in predominantly white neighborhoods. The report also found a stronger correlation between both labor force participation and unemployment, and home broadband computer access in Pennsylvania compared to the national average.

In June 2020, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf called on the federal government to provide broadband funding, [stating](#):

An investment in broadband Internet connectivity is an investment in our commonwealth’s

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future and prosperity. The critical need for high-speed Internet has become clear in light of our efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, as more families work and learn from home, businesses operate online services and patients access medical care through telehealth.

Now, as Pennsylvania focuses on our economic recovery, it's critical that broadband Internet access becomes a reality for every community, and especially our rural areas. It's clear that this is more than a Pennsylvania issue — the digital divide exists in communities across the country. It's in everyone's best interest, especially as technology continues to evolve and advance, that we make a significant infrastructural investment.

Additional Resources:

- [Pennsylvania launches broadband map to prepare ISPs for federal auction](#)
- [Pennsylvania Broadband Map](#)
- [FCC auction money part of PA broadband access solution](#)
- [States couldn't afford to wait for the FCC's broadband maps to improve. So they didn't](#)

