Digital Equity

Understanding Access to Broadband Internet in Colorado DECEMBER 2025

COLORADO HEALTH ACCESS SURVEY

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Over three hundred thousand Coloradans lack access to broadband internet, or high-speed internet access. Digital literacy and access are considered a "super social determinant of health" because they are critical for workforce participation, accessing essential resources like food and housing, and building community connections. As Colorado invests in digital equity initiatives, including through the Office of the Future of Work, understanding the current landscape helps inform these efforts and identify gaps in access across different populations.

The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, in partnership with the Colorado Office of eHealth Innovation, collaborated with the Colorado Health Institute to sponsor digital equity questions on the 2025 Colorado Health Access Survey. Since 2023, the survey has tracked Coloradans' access to and use of broadband internet and related programs to understand how digital connectivity has evolved over time.

In 2025, 94.7% of Coloradans live in households with broadband internet access, similar to the 95.3% of Coloradans with broadband access in 2023.

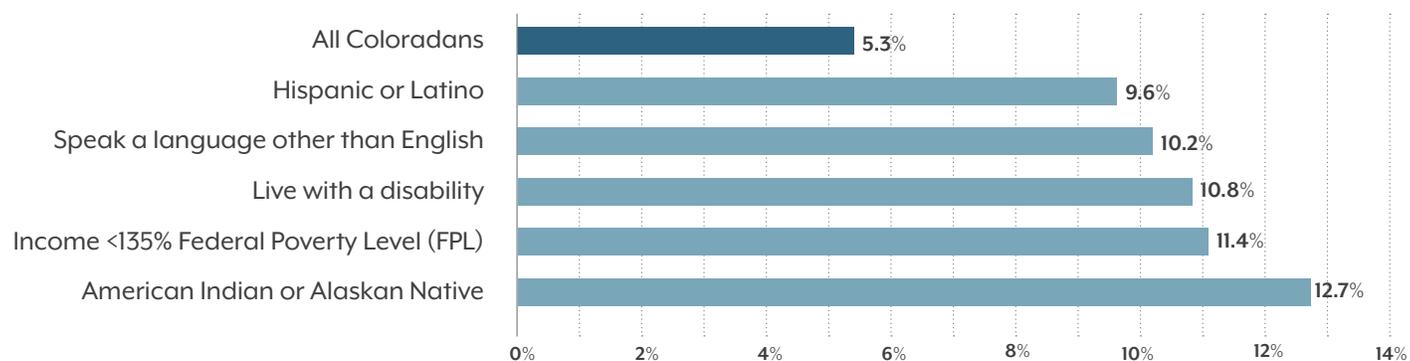## Who is still struggling to access broadband internet and why?

About 5.3%, or 308,000 Coloradans, do not have broadband internet access. Many of these Coloradans experience disparities across income, disability status, race and ethnicity, language, and geography. Coloradans who have lower incomes, live with a disability, speak a language other than English, or identify as Hispanic or Latino, or American Indian or Alaskan Native are more likely to lack broadband internet (See Figure 1).

Broadband access also varies geographically, with 9.8% of Coloradans who live in a rural part of the state lacking broadband access. Residents of the San Luis Valley (15.5%) and the southwestern corner of the state (15.8%) were least likely to have broadband access (See Map 1).

Figure 1. Some Coloradans are less likely to have access to broadband internet.
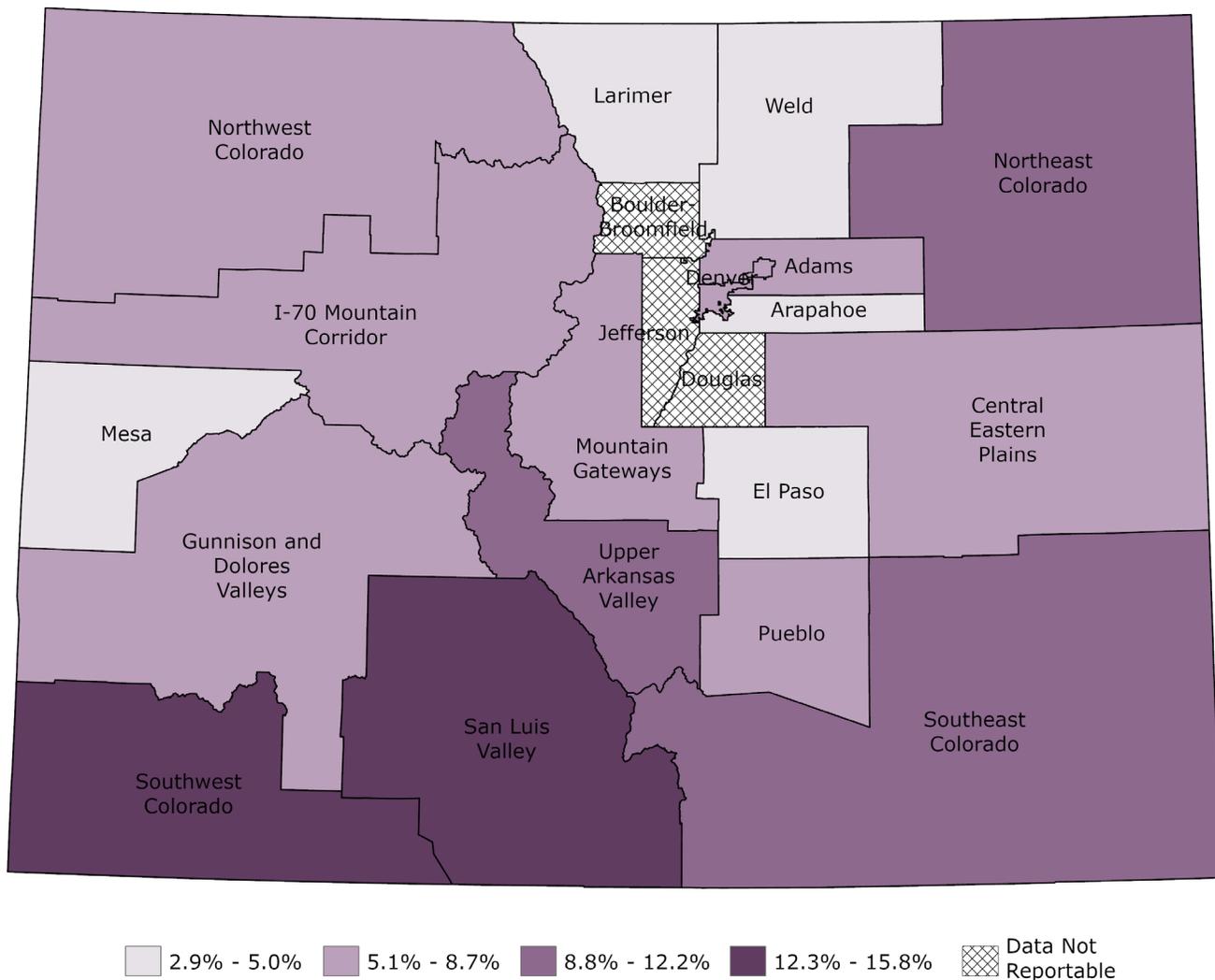
Topic: Coloradans without broadband internet access. **Population:** All Coloradans, by select characteristics. **Year:** 2025

Characteristic	Percent
All Coloradans	5.3%
Hispanic or Latino	9.6%
Speak a language other than English	10.2%
Live with a disability	10.8%
Income <135% Federal Poverty Level (FPL)	11.4%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	12.7%

Map 1: Rural Coloradans are more likely to lack broadband internet access.

Topic: Coloradans without broadband internet access. **Population:** All Coloradans, by Health Statistics Region.
Year: 2025

Legend: 2.9% - 5.0% | 5.1% - 8.7% | 8.8% - 12.2% | 12.3% - 15.8% | Data Not Reportable

It's worth noting that not all Coloradans who lack broadband internet are disconnected from online resources — about a quarter (25.4%) of those without broadband internet say they do not have a use for broadband because they say they can use their smartphone and data plan to do whatever they need to online.

However, about 12.2% of Coloradans without broadband lack access because it is not available where they live, and another 12.9% of those without access simply do not want it.

- **Rural Coloradans** are more likely to not have broadband due to availability (22.4%).

- **Older Coloradans** (age 60 or older) are more likely to simply not want broadband (25.0%).

Cost is the most common barrier to broadband internet access.

The most common reason for not having broadband access comes down to cost:

- 57.3% of Coloradans without broadband internet say the cost of the service itself is too expensive. This is even more pronounced for low-income Coloradans, with 73.5% of those with incomes less than 135% of the FPL ($43,403 for a family of four in 2025) saying cost of the service prevents them from accessing broadband internet.

- Additionally, 17.7% of Coloradans without broadband internet say the cost of a device to connect is too expensive, and 22.6% of low-income Coloradans (<135% FPL) report this as a barrier.

Internet discount programs, like Lifeline, can help reduce the cost burden of broadband access. Consumers can qualify for the Lifeline benefit if their income is at or below 135% of FPL, or if they participate in SNAP, Medicaid, or other federal programs.[1] This means 11.4% of Coloradans without broadband access, or about 66,000 Coloradans, may qualify for this program based on their income.

However, few people take advantage of these programs, with only 10.1% of Coloradans with eligible incomes (<135% FPL) enrolled. The most common reasons why eligible Coloradans are not enrolled are because they are unaware the programs exist (53.7%) or believe they are not eligible (27.7%).

To improve people's awareness of these programs, information could be shared in health care provider offices, since 78.2% of income-eligible people had a health care visit in the last year.

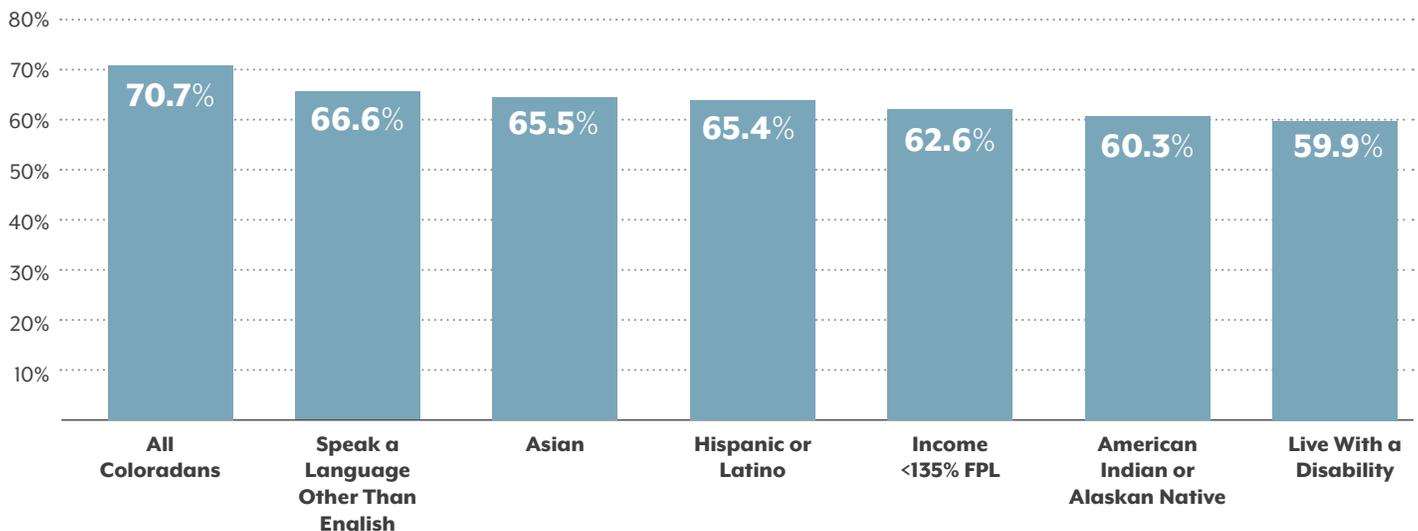## Digital literacy varies among Coloradans.

While most Coloradans are confident using the internet (86.8%), and 70.7% say they know how to keep their information safe online, some Coloradans feel less confident in their ability to use the internet while keeping their information safe and secure.

Coloradans with low incomes, living with a disability, who speak a language other than English, or who belong to certain racial and ethnic groups are less likely to report that they know how to keep their information safe and secure on the internet (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: Most Coloradans say they know how to keep their information safe and secure online, but confidence varies.
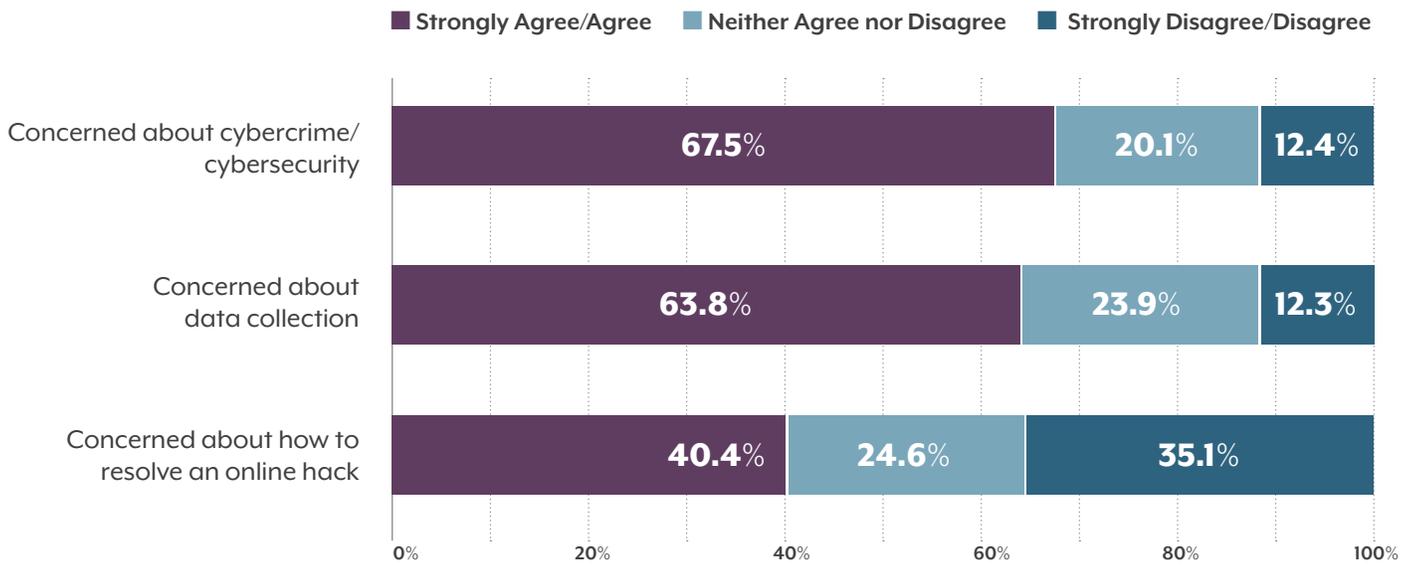
Topic: Coloradans who strongly agree/agree that they know how to keep their information safe and secure online.
Population: All Coloradans, by select characteristics. **Year:** 2025.

Category	Percentage
All Coloradans	70.7%
Speak a Language Other Than English	66.6%
Asian	65.5%
Hispanic or Latino	65.4%
Income <135% FPL	62.6%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	60.3%
Live With a Disability	59.9%

Figure 3: Digital safety and security remain a concern for Coloradans.

Topic: Coloradans who are concerned about different elements of online safety. **Population:** All Coloradans. **Year:** 2025

■ Strongly Agree/Agree   ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree   ■ Strongly Disagree/Disagree

	Strongly Agree/Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Strongly Disagree/Disagree
Concerned about cybercrime/cybersecurity	67.5%	20.1%	12.4%
Concerned about data collection	63.8%	23.9%	12.3%
Concerned about how to resolve an online hack	40.4%	24.6%	35.1%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

Additionally, most Coloradans are concerned about how their information is collected and shared (63.8%) and cybercrime or cybersecurity (67.5%), and close to half (40.4%) are concerned they would not know what to do if their accounts were hacked (See Figure 3).

True digital equity means that Coloradans should not only have access to web-based services but also feel safe and confident in their ability to use them. Programs like Colorado's Digital Navigator Program help Coloradans set up home internet and web-enabled equipment[i] while also increasing digital literacy across a range of ages and languages.[2]

Coloradans use the internet to access health and safety resources and to connect to others, but internet use is not always associated with healthier outcomes.

How are Coloradans using the internet to access services?

Many Coloradans use the internet to access health care and address health-related social needs:

- **70.4%** of Coloradans used the internet in the past year to find information about local public safety.

- **41.9%** used the internet for a telemedicine visit.

- **36.9%** searched for a job and **28.8%** have applied for a job.

- **20.5%** searched for information about public programs like Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or similar services.

While the internet serves as a useful tool for accessing services, these data also suggest the internet is not the only way Coloradans are learning about and accessing resources. This may reflect either their preference for other channels or a hesitancy to use the web to address their needs.

How are Coloradans using the internet to connect with others?

CHAS data show that Coloradans frequently use the internet to connect with others:

- **86.9%** communicated with family and friends through the internet.

- **72.9%** of Coloradans used social media.

- **32.1%** found events in their community.

[i] Colorado SB22-140 funding for the Digital Navigator Pilot Program ended June 2025.

CHAS data also show that Coloradans who use the internet for these activities are more likely to be lonely than those who do not. However, the direction of this relationship is unclear. Increased online interaction may contribute to feelings of loneliness, or people who are lonely may be seeking connection through online channels. For example, CHAS data show that LGBTQ+ Coloradans are more likely to use the internet for these purposes than heterosexual and cisgender Coloradans.

Data collected over time can provide a clearer picture on the impacts of internet use on health, including in addressing issues like loneliness.

Next Steps

CHAS data confirm that most Coloradans are connected to broadband, and those who are not often face cost-barriers to accessing broadband internet services. While most Coloradans are using the internet to communicate with friends and family, use social media, or even to get urgent information about local public safety, less than half have used it for telemedicine visits or to learn about public assistance programs. There may be an opportunity to leverage more commonly used online resources, like social media or local online resources, to highlight ways to access public assistance programs online. Additionally, it is important to continue to provide offline resources to support public assistance enrollment as well.

Additionally, some Coloradans, particularly LGBTQ+ Coloradans, are turning to the internet at even higher rates to stay connected to others, despite facing higher rates of loneliness. Data from future CHAS surveys can help determine whether this level of connection is ultimately helpful or harmful.

Ongoing state and local efforts should not only focus on providing infrastructure and resources for Coloradans to get connected but also provide resources so that Coloradans can use the internet safely and securely in ways that are meaningful to their health and well-being.

Endnotes

[1] Colorado Broadband Office (2025). Broadband Resources for Coloradans.
https://broadband.colorado.gov/resources/broadband-resources-for-coloradans

[2] Digital Navigators (2025). Office of the Lieutenant Governor. https://servecolorado.colorado.gov/digitalnavigators