California Statewide Digital Equity Online Public Survey: Select Findings

About this Document

The Statewide Digital Equity Online Public Survey reached a total of 43,432 Californians in all 58 counties, with a total of 36,273 valid responses recorded after data cleaning and validation. The survey was released in 14 languages with every language accessed by respondents. Aging individuals (60+), women, and ethnic or racial minority groups were the most represented covered populations. The key findings below represent a portion of the more detailed Digital Equity Online Survey Analysis and Needs Assessment Data Report.

Access, Affordability, and Adoption of Broadband

5% of survey respondents reported they are not able to connect to the internet at home.
- Another 6% of respondents who are able to connect do so only through a mobile data plan or community Wi-Fi.

The most prominent reason for not having internet at home is cost (60% of respondents with no home internet access cite cost as a reason), followed by lack of available or adequate internet services in the area (cited by 20% of respondents).

42% of respondents pay more than $100 for their home internet service (which may include other bundled services like TV, phone service, etc.)
- This number is even higher for individuals in rural areas (51%), veterans (46%), and tribal communities (46%).

27% of speed test respondents had download speeds below 25 Mbps and 20% had upload speeds below 3 Mbps.
- 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload is the FCC's standard for adequate internet service.
- Individuals in rural areas, unhoused individuals, and aging individuals had the greatest share of respondents with inadequate internet speeds.

42% of respondents have heard about the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and 22% have heard about discounted internet services by ISPs.

- ACP awareness is lacking among individuals with limited English proficiency, tribal communities, individuals in rural areas, and immigrants.

10% of respondents who are aware of ACP but are not enrolled in discounted internet programs don't know how to apply.

- The higher share of respondents who don't know how to apply are Individuals with limited English proficiency, individuals in poverty, unhoused individuals, and immigrants.

Availability and Affordability of Consumer Devices and Technical Support for those Devices

A smartphone is the most abundantly available device for survey respondents.

- However, many covered populations are more likely than overall survey respondents to rely on smartphones only for access to the internet, causing them to be underconnected when it comes to internet access.
- 0.3% of survey respondents reporting home internet access lack a device that can connect to the Internet.
  - However, unhoused respondents are six times more likely than general survey respondents to lack a device.
  - Furthermore, respondents belonging to a Tribal community are four times more likely to lack access to a device than general survey respondents.

1 in 5 survey respondents did not have access to technical support or assistance within their household or community.

- In particular, unhoused individuals, low-income individuals, and individuals with disabilities were more likely to report that they had no one to turn to in their household or community, to provide them with technical assistance if they had trouble with their Internet or their devices.

Individual Confidence in Successfully Completing Tasks Using Digital Skills

Individuals with limited English proficiency indicated the least confidence of any covered population when performing digital skills.

- These skills include day-to-day and essential tasks such as connecting a device to a Wi-Fi network, sending an email with an attachment, or searching for information online about jobs or healthcare.
- 33% of respondents are interested in internet or computer training classes. Among these, almost 50% of respondents who are not able to connect to the internet at home or who connect through a mobile data plan or community Wi-Fi only showed interest in such training classes.
61% of individuals with limited English proficiency showed interest in internet or computer training classes. This shows the need for providing digital resources and trainings in languages other than English.

Individual Awareness and Use of Measures to Secure Online Privacy and Internet Safety

22% of survey respondents who use a desktop, laptop, or tablet are not familiar with cybersecurity measures.

Compared to overall survey respondents, respondents belonging to covered populations are more likely to lack familiarity with cybersecurity measures.

- Individuals with limited English proficiency had the highest share of respondents unfamiliar with cybersecurity (54%), followed by immigrants (43%), and respondents living in households below 150% of the federal poverty line (40%).
- Unhoused respondents (39%) and respondents belonging to racial or ethnic minority groups (33%) were more likely than overall respondents to lack familiarity with cybersecurity measures.

Almost 1 in 5 survey respondents (17%) who were familiar with cybersecurity measures did not have cybersecurity measures actually installed on their devices or were unsure about the status of their cybersecurity measures.

Almost 1 in 3 survey respondents (30%) who did not have cybersecurity measures (or were unsure about the status) also reported that they could not easily access technical support from nearby sources.

Online Accessibility and Inclusivity of Public Resources and Services

The overwhelming majority of survey respondents are not utilizing telehealth services.

- Only 15% of all survey respondents reported accessing healthcare services online, and this low rate of accessing online healthcare was consistent across all covered population groups.

1 in 2 survey respondents overall (49%) do not utilize online classes, and close to 1 in 4 respondents (27%) do not utilize the internet to search for other educational resources.

- Certain covered populations were more reliant on educational resources - immigrants and individuals with limited English proficiency were much more likely to utilize online classes for learning, with 66-68% of both groups attending online classes.
- Furthermore, aging respondents and veteran respondents were even less likely than the general survey population to attend online classes or utilize online services to search for educational resources.

Workforce development resources online are surprisingly underutilized.

- 55% of survey respondents rarely or never use the internet for job searches.
- Aging respondents, veterans, and respondents living in rural areas are even less likely to utilize the internet for a job search.
- Almost 70% of aging respondents rarely or never use the internet for a job search.

Certain covered populations were less likely than overall survey respondents to have hybrid or remote jobs, including low-income respondents, unhoused respondents, aging individuals, and individuals with disabilities.

- Close to 50% of individuals in the aforementioned groups had rarely or never used the internet to work from home.

Most survey respondents rarely or never utilize the internet to contact elected officials, or participate in public or government meetings, including across covered populations.

- Survey respondents were more likely to utilize online services to apply for or use public benefits, such as CalFresh/SNAP, and to find information about government services such as public benefits. However, over half (55%) of survey respondents rarely or never used the internet to apply for benefits.

Essential Services: Housing was the most underutilized essential service available online. 63% of survey respondents rarely or never used the internet to search for housing.

- However, almost 80% of unhoused respondents were utilizing this service.