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New National Survey Offers State Policymakers and Digital Equity Leaders Critical Data on Internet Affordability to Inform Implementation of Federal Broadband Infrastructure Funds

EveryoneOn releases national report on broadband adoption among low- and lower-middle income households, finding nearly one out of five households with annual incomes of \$50,000 or less lost connectivity during the pandemic

Washington, D.C., December 7, 2021 – Today, [EveryoneOn](https://www.everyoneon.org), a national digital inclusion organization, released the first report in a three-part series on the digital divide during the pandemic: *Affordability and the Digital Divide*. The findings were informed by a national survey on broadband adoption among low- and lower-middle income households conducted by EveryoneOn in collaboration with [Dr. John B. Horrigan](#), an expert digital divide researcher. The survey was funded by the Ballmer Group and Microsoft.

Understanding affordability of internet service and its role in adoption are crucial for developing solutions to close the digital divide. The goals of the study were first to understand the barriers to connectivity and efficacy of low-cost internet service options; and second, to use the findings to inform digital inclusion policies, advocacy efforts, and other initiatives that aim to drive digital equity.

The first report released today, *Affordability and the Digital Divide*, shows:

- 7 million households whose annual incomes are \$50,000 or less have home high-speed service due to free or discount offers;
- 40% said they cannot afford to pay anything for a home internet high-speed service subscription;
- 46% said it is "very" or "somewhat" difficult to build their monthly internet bill into their budget;
- 62% would require significant cost relief (relative to market prices) to have broadband service at home;
- 25% said they heard of free or discount internet offers and 23% heard of the Emergency Broadband Benefit;
- 28% of those who heard of either discount program (in above bullet) found it difficult to sign up; and
- 37% of households said they could not afford any more than \$100 for a computer.

These findings, along with calls to action included in the report, will provide guidance to policymakers on how to use the \$65 billion in funds for broadband and the Digital Equity Act included in the recently passed Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

“Our goal with this research was to learn if low- and low-middle income households were able to maintain connectivity through COVID-19, and if not, why not,” said Norma Fernandez, CEO of EveryoneOn. “We wanted to understand to what extent COVID-19 exacerbated precarious connectivity in low-income communities in order to inform more inclusive digital equity policies and initiatives.”

Survey findings will be rolled out in a three-part series over the next few months, each highlighting a specific theme:

- Report 1: *Affordability and the Digital Divide* (released today)
- Report 2: *Digital Skills Trainings are Critical to Digital Inclusion Initiatives*
- Report 3: *Focus Group Insights from Households Affected by the Digital Divide*

The *Affordability and the Digital Divide* report is available for download on EveryoneOn's website: everyoneon.org/2021-national-study.

"We have long known that affordability is a central barrier contributing to the digital divide in the United States," said Vickie Robinson, general manager of Microsoft's Airband Initiative. "Our hope is that the findings in this report will help inform the critical next steps of broadband funding implementation to ensure we're maximizing the potential of resources to connect those who need it most."

Methodology

This report uses data from two national surveys of low- and lower-middle income households. One is an online panel of 2,512 respondents from SSRS, Inc., a survey and market research firm. It includes households whose annual incomes are \$50,000 or less and have some online connectivity. Most (85%) have high-speed connections such as fiber, cable modem, or digital subscriber line service. Remaining online users have limited home access via cellular data plans, satellite, or dial-up service. The other survey was a telephone survey of 382 households with no internet connectivity at home, a sample aimed at understanding barriers to subscribing to internet service at home.

About EveryoneOn

Since 2012, [EveryoneOn](https://everyoneon.org) has helped people in underserved communities unlock social and economic opportunity by connecting them to low-cost internet and devices, and providing digital skills trainings. The organization collaborates with government, community organizations, nonprofits, foundations and corporations to deliver services that give individuals and families the power to use the internet. EveryoneOn has connected over 890,000 people to the internet, provided more than 5,000 devices and delivered digital skills trainings to hundreds of participants nationwide. To learn more, visit www.everyoneon.org, and follow on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram @EveryoneOn.

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