

# Connect Americans Now (CAN): Bridging America's Digital Divide



## About Connect Americans Now

Founded in 2017, Connect Americans Now (CAN) is a broad-based coalition of more than 300 companies and organizations representing leading voices in agriculture, education, health care, veterans' issues, technology and small business — committed to urgent action to completely eliminate the digital divide in every American community.

Broadband internet is vital for the expansion of economic opportunity and prosperity for all Americans. CAN believes a lack of broadband denies access to the full promise of the American Dream for too many of our communities. Americans without broadband internet need the resources required to afford broadband service, access to broadband-supported devices and the digital skills necessary to utilize the full potential of digital technology.

Unconnected and under-connected communities are relying on policymakers in Washington to act and advance permanent solutions to close the broadband gap and ensure every American can unlock the full potential of 21st century digital tools.

## The Problem: Breaking Down the Digital Divide

Today, more than [42 million](#) Americans lack affordable, reliable access to broadband internet and as many as [120 million](#) Americans are not using the internet at broadband speeds.

The challenge is especially acute in income insecure communities where too many cannot afford broadband service or lack access to infrastructure and devices.



**Equity:** The broadband gap disproportionately impacts communities of color. [35 percent](#) of Latino adults and [29 percent](#) of African American adults lack a broadband connection at home. This stark divide not only exacerbates systemic challenges but hinders the economic progress of the entire nation. We must work to ensure every community has the means to succeed.



**Education:** Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than [15 million](#) American students (30 percent of public school attendees) lacked broadband service, a device or both needed to support distance learning at home. That number climbed during the pandemic to as many as [17 million](#) students. Students in rural and urban areas feel the negative impact of this persistent broadband gap. Studies show that students without home access to broadband internet are [less likely](#) to plan to attend college, face a digital skills gap equivalent to three years' worth of schooling and score lower on standardized tests.



**Health Care:** Americans' use of broadband-enabled telehealth solutions climbed [35 percent](#) from 2019 to 2020. More than [75 percent](#) of Americans say they would like to use telehealth services in the future, but Americans without broadband access are being left behind without access to these tools that can increase access to care, improve health care outcomes and enhance quality of life.



**Workforce and Jobs:** Nearly [one-third](#) of Americans aged 16 to 64 have no or very limited digital skills. This negatively impacts American companies who rely on a skilled workforce to remain competitive and succeed and hurts communities that face persistent income inequality and a lack of upward mobility and opportunity.



**Agriculture:** Broadband brings the promise of precision agriculture and remote monitoring equipment — helping farmers optimize irrigation, conserve resources and increase yields, but as many as [29 percent](#) of American farms lack broadband access. Closing the digital divide will unleash the full potential of American agriculture.

## The Solution: Closing the Broadband Gap

More than ever, creating good jobs, lifting wages, reducing poverty, improving health outcomes and strengthening education depend on affordable, reliable broadband connectivity in every American community. A lack of access and affordability are holding our country back. In rural Arizona, only [seven percent](#) of adults have access to a broadband connection. And in New York City, broadband infrastructure is present, but [nearly half](#) of adults still don't use the internet at broadband speeds.

CAN encourages Members of Congress to support a three-pronged infrastructure approach to close the broadband gap completely and permanently in every American community:

- **Deployment:** investments in mixed-technology physical broadband infrastructure to reach Americans without access to broadband service in the most cost-effective and rapid manner possible.
- **Adoption:** Adequate funding to ensure all Americans can afford broadband service and access to the devices necessary to participate in the digital economy. America needs permanent funding mechanisms to ensure the income insecure — whether they are living in urban centers or rural communities — all have access to the same opportunities.
- **Skills:** Americans need programs to unlock digital skills everyone needs to participate in our 21st century digital world. Without these skills, large portions of our population will not be able to utilize the full potential of digital technology to further their education, participate in our evolving workforce or access tools that can improve their health and quality of life.



To learn more, please visit [www.ConnectAmericansNow.com](http://www.ConnectAmericansNow.com)