



THE BROADER COSTS OF LIMITED ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

When ALICE households are not able to benefit from affordable, safe access to broadband technology, communities feel the impact both economically and socially:

- **The “digital divide” perpetuates gaps in education, health care, and earning power:** For children, reliable internet access is directly tied to educational outcomes, including test scores, grades, and high school graduation rates. For adults, opportunities for continuing education — more frequently offered online in recent years — depend on reliable internet access.³⁹

The growth of online health education resources and health care services can improve health care access and outcomes, but the impacts will be uneven unless the digital divide based on income, race/ethnicity, and community type is closed.⁴⁰

Reduced earning opportunities. With reduced means to search for jobs, participate in the gig economy, and take advantage of online training, those without high-speed broadband internet have less earning power. According to one estimate, a speed increase of four megabytes/second was associated with a \$2,100 increase in household income.⁴¹

- **Opportunities for civic participation are reduced.** Lack of access to broadband means fewer opportunities to stay informed about community events, connect with local organizations and fellow community members, and to reach out to government officials. A 2013 study found that 34 percent of adults had recently used the internet to contact a government official or participate in an online public forum.⁴²

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