

# THE FIELD POLL

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## **Big Disparities Persist in Californians' Access to Broadband Internet at Home, Even as More Are Going Online**

According to a new statewide *Field Poll*, 84% of California households now have access to high-speed Internet at home. This proportion is up nine points from 2014.

Most of the increase in broadband Internet connectivity is due to the growing popularity of mobile, smart phone devices. There has been a near doubling – from 8% to 14% – in the proportion of Californians who access the Internet at home only through a smart phone. While this is enabling more to get online, these users have more limited functionality when connecting to the Internet than those connecting from a desktop, laptop or tablet computer. In addition, some smart phone users face limitations in data access based on their monthly cell phone plans.

The difference between those who have broadband Internet access through a home computing device and those who don't is fostering what some are calling an "under-connected" class of Internet users. And, these users largely come from the same population subgroups as those with historically lower levels of residential Internet access. For example, not only are low-income Californians less likely than high-income earners to have Internet access at home (68% vs. 97%), the disparities grow wider when comparing how residents with access are connecting to the Internet. Just 43% of Californians with incomes of less than \$22,000 can access the Internet at home through a computing device, compared to 94% among those with incomes of \$100,000 or more.

Similarly, a smaller proportion of the state's Spanish-speaking Latinos (69%) than others have access to broadband Internet at home, and just 39% connect to the Internet through a home computing device.

Cost is by far the single biggest factor preventing those without Internet connectivity at home from going online. Of those without Internet access at home, three in four (74%) cite its expense or not having a computer or smart phone as a reason for not being connected, and 39% volunteer this as their main reason. No other factor is cited by more than 18% as a primary reason for not having Internet access at home.

The survey finds that 69% of Californians think it is extremely or very important to ensure that all California households have access to high speed Internet. Another 21% feel this is somewhat important. Just 6% believe this public policy objective is not important.

Similarly, greater than seven in ten Californians (71%) feel it is extremely or very important to get all Californians online, with another 18% saying this is somewhat important. Only 8% see this goal as not important.

Californians are also using the Internet at home in an ever increasing variety of ways. Greater than eight in ten users report going online to stay connected with family and friends (90%), to keep up with the news (84%), to assist children with their homework (84%)\*, and to watch or download TV shows, movies, games or listen to music (80%).

Majorities also say they are going online at home to manage their money or bank online (70%), get health or medical information or communicate with a health care provider (66%), search for job opportunities (60%), learn about or access government services (57%), and gain new career skills or take classes online (53%).

These are the topline findings from the annual Broadband Adoption Survey in California, conducted by telephone among 1,635 California adults in six languages on behalf of the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF), a non-profit foundation focused on promoting broadband deployment and adoption, by *The Field Poll*.

According to Sunne Wright McPeak, CETF's President and CEO, "The task ahead is not just getting all Californians connected to the Internet. There are now increasing concerns about *how* Californians are connected at home. Parents needing to assist their children with school work, job seekers needing to complete job applications online, workers wanting to gain new career skills by taking online classes, and seniors or the disabled needing to communicate with their doctors or to access government services – all are at a big disadvantage if their only means of connecting to the Internet at home is through a mobile phone."

The survey also finds that seniors age 65 or older continue to lag behind other population segments in having access to broadband Internet at home. Just 56% of Californians age 65 or older report this, while 44% do not. Further analysis of the seniors without Internet access shows them to have the following demographic profile: low income, women, renters, did not attend college, Latino or Asian American, and first generation immigrants. Other population subgroups with lower levels of Internet access at home are the disabled, Californians living in population areas of the state with fewer than 10,000 residents, and those who have not graduated from high school.

*Note: PowerPoint graphs summarizing the survey results, along with tables comparing the demographic characteristics of those with and without broadband Internet access at home, are available for download from [Field's website](#).*

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\* Percentage based on households where a child under age 18 resides

## Information About The Survey

### Methodological Details

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The findings in this report come from a telephone survey completed June 8-July 2, 2016 among a random sample of 1,635 California adults. The survey was conducted on behalf of the California Emerging Technology Fund, a non-profit foundation set up by the California Public Utilities Commission.

To capture the diversity of the California adult population, the survey was administered in six languages and dialects – English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese and Korean, depending on the preference of the respondent.

The sample was developed using a dual frame random digit dial cell phone and landline methodology to generate telephone listings covering the state of California. Up to six attempts were made to reach, screen and interview each randomly selected adult on different days and times of day during the interviewing period. Of the 1,635 interviews completed with adults statewide, 1,309 were completed by respondents on a cell phone and 326 were completed on a landline or other phone.

After the completion of interviewing, the combined cell phone and landline samples were weighted to align it to known parameters of the state's adult population. The weighting process also takes into account the higher probability of reaching respondents who regularly receive personal calls on both a landline and cell phone.

Sampling error estimates applicable to the results of any probability-based survey depend on sample size and the percentage distributions being examined. The maximum sampling error for results from the overall random sample of adults is +/- 2.6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

The maximum sampling error estimates are based on survey findings near the middle of the sampling distribution (i.e., results near 30%-60%). Percentages at or near either tail of the distributions (i.e., results closer to 10% or 90%) have somewhat smaller margins of error. There are other potential sources of error in surveys of public opinion besides sampling error. However, the overall design and execution of this survey sought to minimize these other possible errors.

*The Field Poll* was established in 1947 as *The California Poll* by Mervin Field. The Poll has operated continuously since then as an independent, non-partisan survey of California public opinion. The Poll receives funding from media subscribers, from foundations, not-for-profit organizations, and from the University of California and California State University systems, who receive the data files from each *Field Poll* survey shortly after its completion for teaching and secondary research purposes.

### Questions Asked

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ASKED OF ALL ADULTS: Can you or can others in your household connect to the Internet from home? This includes connecting to the Internet from a smart phone or from a desktop, laptop or tablet computer. (IF YES, ASK: Is that through a smart phone, or through a desktop, laptop, or tablet computer?) (ANSWER CAN BE A MULTIPLE YES)

ASKED OF THOSE WHO CAN CONNECT THROUGH DESKTOP/LAPTOP/TABLET: When connecting to the Internet from a computer at home, do you connect through a high speed or broadband connection, such as through D-S-L, cable, fiber optic, a T-1 line, or satellite or is it through a dial-up modem connection? IF DON'T KNOW: People who have a dial-up connection to the Internet hear telephone tones and other sounds whenever their computer is connecting them to the Internet. When connecting to the Internet from a computer at your home, do you hear telephone tones and other sounds?

ASKED OF THOSE WHO CONNECT THROUGH SMART PHONE AND NOT DESKTOP/LAPTOP/TABLET: Just to confirm, the only way that you or others in your household can connect to the Internet at home is through a smart phone. Is that correct?

ASKED OF ALL THOSE WHO CAN CONNECT TO THE INTERNET AT HOME THROUGH ANY DEVICE: Do you or do others in your household use the Internet at home... (to learn about or obtain access to government services) (to keep in touch with family or friends) (to find out about job opportunities or to apply for a job) (to manage money, transfer funds or bank online) (to gain new career skills or take a class or training course) (to get health or medical information or communicate with a doctor) (IF CHILD IN HOUSEHOLD: to assist the children in your household to learn or keep up with their schoolwork) (to keep up with the news) (to watch or download TV shows or movies, play games or listen to music) ITEMS IN RANDOM ORDER.

ASKED OF HOUSEHOLDS NOT CONNECTED TO INTERNET: I am going to read some reasons why people do not have Internet service at home. For each, please tell me whether or not this is a reason why your household doesn't have Internet access. (Internet service is too expensive) (Don't have a computer or a smart phone) (Internet service is not available or adequate where I live) (Not interested) (It's too difficult to set up and learn) (Too busy, don't have the time) (Can access it from another place if needed) (Concerns about privacy or computer viruses) ITEMS READ ONE AT A TIME IN RANDOM ORDER AND ASKED, Is this a reason why your household doesn't have Internet service? IF MULTIPLE REASONS ARE CITED: You gave the following answers as reasons your household doesn't have Internet service. (IF MULTIPLE CATEGORIES MENTIONED ASK). Which of these would you say is the main reason your household doesn't have Internet service? (CATEGORIES MENTIONED READ BACK IN RANDOM ORDER)

Do you feel that you or others in your household are at a disadvantage when you or they want to do any of the following but cannot because your household is not connected to the Internet?... (to learn about or obtain access to government services) (to keep in touch with family or friends) (to find out about job opportunities or to apply for a job) (to manage money, transfer funds or bank online) (to gain new career skills or take a class or training course) (to get health or medical information or communicate with a doctor) (IF CHILD IN HOUSEHOLD: to assist the children in your household to learn or keep up with their schoolwork) (to keep up with the news) (to watch or download TV shows or movies, play games or listen to music) ITEMS READ ONE AT A TIME IN RANDOM ORDER.

ASKED OF ALL ADULTS: Do you (or do others in your household) ever connect to the Internet through a high speed or broadband connection outside your home, such as at work, at or near a school, at or near a library or other public building or outdoor space, at or near a store like Starbucks, at the home of a friend or family member, or some other place? (IF YES: Is that at work, at or near a school, at or near a library, other public building or outdoor space, at or near a store, at the home of a friend or family member, or from some other place? (ANSWER CAN BE A MULTIPLE)

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is extremely important and 1 is not at all important, how important do you feel it is for all households in California to have access to high speed Internet from an Internet provider?

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is extremely important and 1 is not at all important, how important is it that all Californians get their household connected to the Internet so that all residents have the ability to go online from a smart phone or from a desktop, laptop or tablet computer at home?