



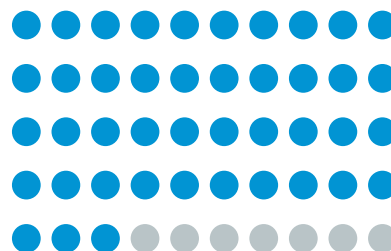
## 3 Ways High-Speed Internet Enriches Lives of Rural Americans

Previously underserved communities share insights and benefits the internet brings to their small-town markets.

Those of us with high-speed internet – and that includes most Americans – may very well take the service for granted and cannot imagine life without it. In fact, according to the Pew Research Center, one-fourth of the rural U.S. population does not have access to a broadband connection.<sup>1</sup> The good news is, we're making progress toward solving the digital equity equation, one connection at a time.

With high-speed internet more widely available in previously underserved<sup>2</sup> communities, we're seeing the world become more accessible with increased access to online jobs and remote work, broader online educational resources and opportunities, improved healthcare and access to telehealth appointments and new business opportunities that bring greater economic impact to rural communities.

Today, high-speed internet is something we count on to function day to day. The service elevates the lives and livelihoods of Americans whose broadband needs have been previously unmet.



**86%**

of consumers with recently available high-speed internet say it has improved their lives.

The 2023 Cox Expansion Impact Survey found 86% of consumer respondents with recently available high-speed internet said their lives have improved.

## Younger people are more likely to remain in their communities when there's a high-speed internet connection at home.

In 2023, the Biden administration outlined how states and U.S. territories will distribute \$42.5 billion from the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) for building high-speed internet access.<sup>2</sup> This is part of the federal government's initiative to close the gap – the economical, educational and social inequalities – between those with and without online access.

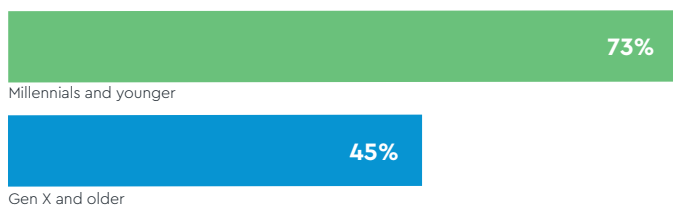
Those living in rural communities or regions lacking high-speed internet access are often hindered in their economic growth and face challenges obtaining crucial services, including education and healthcare.

NPR recently reported that rural U.S. is suffering from population loss. Young adults are heading off to college or leaving their hometowns for better job opportunities. As they migrate to cities and suburbs, rural communities start to shrink.<sup>3</sup>

*High-speed internet encourages younger generations to remain in their communities, with prospects of remote learning and working.*

Yet these communities offer younger adults more affordable housing, less traffic congestion and a slower pace of life. High-speed internet will help enable these communities to thrive by retaining residents and attracting new ones.

In fact, **70%** of respondents 30 or younger indicate that they are more likely to stay in their community if it has a high-speed connection. **High-speed internet has greatly improved the lives of younger generations more than older generations:**



As remote work becomes more prevalent, young adults are no longer restricted to urban centers for employment. They have the flexibility to work from any location with a fast, dependable internet connection. The same goes for educational opportunities.

## High-speed internet drives local economic prosperity.

How many of the millions of Americans without a high-speed connection have to go to a coffee shop, library or other local area to access the internet? Although the number can't be quantified, this is reality for many.

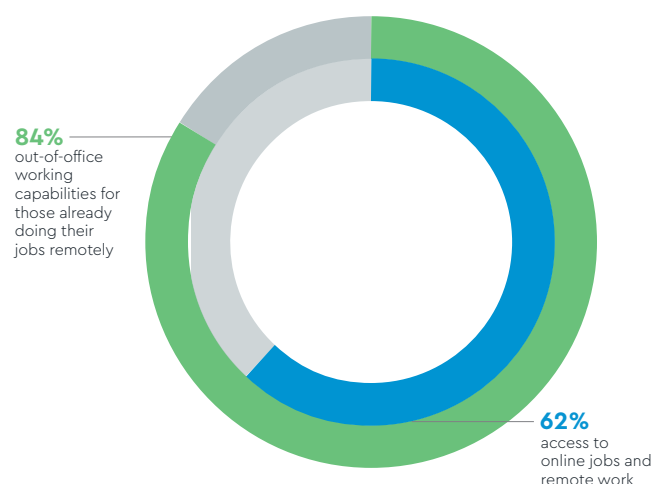
High-speed internet stimulates economic growth in rural communities, and businesses need it to succeed. When they do well and grow, their successes have a multiplier effect on the local economy as residents have more options for jobs that need to be filled.

Further, it's next to impossible to entice businesses to communities without it. Companies need reliable high-speed internet to conduct business and is therefore a catalyst to attracting new companies and new jobs.

This type of connectivity creates plentiful options for online and remote work. Millions of jobs rely on internet connectivity; a lack of high-speed service would be a deal-breaker for many of these remote or hybrid positions.

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In fact, **84%** of respondents already doing their jobs remotely said high-speed internet will improve their remote working abilities, and nearly **two-thirds (62%)** said high-speed internet will improve access to online jobs and remote work.



For all the above reasons, the majority (53%) of survey respondents feel more optimistic about their economic and employment future with the availability of high-speed internet. Not surprisingly, this skews higher with the younger generations as 75% of millennials and younger reported feeling optimistic.

**"With the recent additions of high-speed internet, our workforce and economic activities will grow significantly. Our residents will have easier and better access to education, be healthier as they can now have telehealth appointments and have faster access to apply for jobs and benefits."**

– Rural County Community Leader

### A high-speed internet connection at home helps bridge the income and education gap.

A 2023 survey reported by eSchool News showed 82% of families and 80% of educators polled strongly feel at-home high-speed internet is extremely important to fulfilling learning outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

Limited high-speed internet access poses significant educational challenges in rural communities. Without reliable internet, students can't access educational resources available outside of their textbooks or classrooms. Opportunities that could improve the quality of their learning are limited. Connecting with teachers and classmates through social media, messaging apps and chat forums is limited or not an option at all. The list goes on.

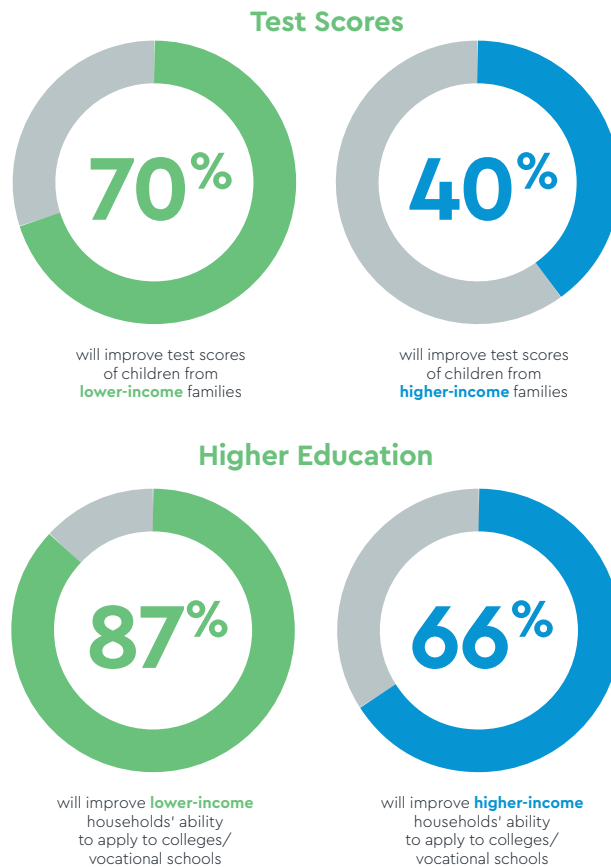
#### High-speed internet narrows the education gap between lower- and higher-income families

Students lacking broadband often encounter learning challenges. This leads to difficulties in completing homework, falling behind, receiving lower grades and sometimes even failing to graduate – potentially limiting their career opportunities and future prosperity.

High-speed internet access narrows the education gap between lower- and higher-income families. The 2023 Cox Expansion Impact Survey revealed that high-speed internet is twice as likely to greatly improve the education of children in lower-income families (<\$50K/year) than higher-income families (>\$50K/year).

A reliable internet connection is an essential component for education and student success inside and outside of the classroom.

Respondents said such connectivity will improve:



**"One of the primary reasons younger families left us was poor internet connectivity. Staying or leaving oftentimes depends on connectivity because everybody streams and gets most of what they need online. Bringing high-speed internet to our community will help us retain even the younger generation, particularly those looking for a more relaxed pace."**

– Rural Community Mayor

**"With the recent additions of high-speed internet, our workforce and economic activities will grow significantly. Our residents will have easier and better access to education, be healthier as they can now have telehealth appointments and have faster access to apply for jobs and benefits."**

– Rural County Community Leader

## Conclusion

The internet is a tie that binds people and communities together: four out of five respondents say they are better connected to friends and family because of their new high-speed internet connection.

High-speed internet access is crucial for rural residents' quality of life. It helps keep younger generations from leaving their community for urban centers, stimulates economic development and vitality through business growth and more job opportunities and improves children's and adults' educational opportunities and grades.

Cox is committed to finding solutions to the digital equity equation through expansion, partnership and affordability opportunities.



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## About the survey

Data cited in this publication came from the 2023 Cox Expansion Impact Survey conducted by Cox in December 2023. Approximately 6,000 of Cox's U.S. customers with a service time of at least one month in previously unserved and underserved areas in AZ, KS, NE, VA, FL, or OK were polled. With 551 respondents, the margin of error for 2023 Cox Expansion Impact survey is +/-4%.

Cox partnered with Arketi Group, an Atlanta-based B2B PR and marketing firm, to produce the 2023 Cox Expansion Impact Survey. Arketi managed data collection and analysis for the quantitative survey and conducted qualitative interviews with select participants.

<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Center, Feb. 2021 CNN Business, Here's how much each state will get in the \$42.5 billion broadband infrastructure plan, June 26, 2023

<sup>2</sup> "Unserved" locations are defined as having broadband speeds below 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload and "underserved" is defined as having below 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload. Section 60102(a)(1), Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Nov. 2021.

<sup>3</sup> NPR, Fighting population loss in the shrinking rural U.S., July 2023

<sup>4</sup> eSchool News, How schools can help students overcome the digital divide, Oct. 23, 2023