

US gains Internet speeds, but gaps remain

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Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Tom Wheeler testifies before the Communications and Technology Subcommittee on Capitol Hill in Washington, May 20, 2014

Americans enjoyed improved Internet connections over the past year, but some providers were inconsistent or fell short of delivering advertised speeds, the US telecom regulator said Wednesday.

The Federal Communications Commission said in its fourth annual "measuring broadband" report that consumers continued to migrate to

higher tiers of service—an average of 21.2 megabits per second in 2013, based on advertised speeds, up from 15.6 Mbps in 2012.

But the FCC said speeds were not up to advertised levels.

Only half the companies delivered 90 percent or better of advertised speed, and several delivered less than 60 percent of the promised speed.

"Consumers deserve to get what they pay for," FCC chairman Tom Wheeler said.

"While it's encouraging to see that in the past these reports have encouraged providers to improve their services, I'm concerned that some providers are failing to deliver consistent speeds to consumers that are commensurate to their advertised speeds.

"As a result, I've directed FCC staff to write to the underperforming companies to ask why this happened and what they will do to solve this."

The report comes amid heated debate over whether the United States is lagging in broadband.

A University of Pennsylvania study released this month found Americans have better access to broadband than most Europeans.

Other studies offer a different view. The World Economic Forum ranked the United States 35th in terms of Internet bandwidth available per user. And a private survey by broadband testing firm Ookla ranked the United States 32nd in the world.

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