

Poll highlights inequities in how Californians access the internet

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The number of Californians with access to high-speed internet at home continues to increase, according to a new poll from UC Berkeley that also found the percentage of residents who connect to broadband only through smartphones has more than doubled in the last two years.

The Berkeley IGS Poll provides an update to a multiyear survey on [high-speed internet access](#) commissioned for 10 years by the California Emerging Technology Fund. The fund is a nonprofit foundation established to provide leadership to close the so-called digital divide by accelerating [broadband](#) deployment and adoption to those now unserved and underserved.

Some 87 percent of California households say they have high-speed [internet](#) connectivity at home, up from 84 percent last year. Yet, the number of those who can only connect to broadband at home via their smartphones has grown from 8 percent two years ago to 18 percent this year.

Accessing broadband only through smartphones has interesting implications. About three in four residents with [broadband access](#) through a computing device say they go online for health information or to do financial tasks online. But fewer than half of those who have high-speed internet access only via their smartphones go online for such tasks, according to the survey of 1,628 Californians conducted by phone in six languages in May.

Nearly seven in 10 households without any internet connectivity say that is because they can't afford it or because they don't have a [smartphone](#) or computing device at home.

Of those without internet access at home, 38 percent say they feel disadvantaged by not being able to learn new job skills or to take classes online, and the same percentage say they feel disadvantaged by not being able to get medical information online. More than one in three report feeling left out by not being able to keep up with the news or stay in touch with family and friends.

More information: escholarship.org/uc/item/3tr560rs

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