

2013-05-13 NTIA Explores Broadband Availability in New Report Series

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May 13, 2013 by Anne Neville, Director, State Broadband Initiative



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Today, NTIA is pleased to introduce a new set of reports, the *Broadband Briefs* series, that use publicly available data collected by the U.S. Department of Commerce to examine broadband availability in greater detail. [This report](#) [1] further examines improvements in broadband availability by speed, technology and location since 2010. NTIA noted in January that most Americans (98 percent) now have access to basic broadband service, and this report explores the change in availability over the last two years -- and the consistency with which broadband speeds are now available across the country.

Since June 2010, broadband availability at all speed levels has increased and basic broadband service is nearly universal in urban areas. While there is still a gap in broadband availability between urban and rural areas, 91 percent of rural Americans have access to basic broadband service as of June 2012. NTIA has been working to address gaps in availability and increase demand for services throughout the country through its Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), while the Rural Utilities Service's Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP) has targeted rural areas in particular. Both programs were part of a 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act initiative aimed at expanding broadband access and adoption. NTIA's State Broadband Initiative (SBI) has also supported broadband expansion and adoption, state and local planning and capacity-building activities.

While basic broadband service – which we define as advertised speeds of 3 Mbps download and 768 kbps upload – is often adequate for sending and receiving email and other services, more of today's applications such as video streaming require much faster speeds. Across the country, broadband availability at higher speed levels has increased significantly since 2010, with the greatest gains in urban areas. Our data show that 88 percent of urban areas and 41 percent of rural areas now have access to broadband speeds of 25 Mbps. While they have yet to match the speeds available from wired services, access to wireless broadband services also has increased dramatically from 2010 to 2012, moving us closer to meeting President Obama's goal of extending advanced 4G

wireless coverage to 98 percent of Americans.

Other highlights from the Broadband Brief include:

- **Changes:** Between June 2010 and June 2012, national broadband availability increased at all advertised speed levels. During both years, the greatest rates of change occurred in the higher speed tiers, beginning with the 25 Mbps or greater tier. The percentage of Americans with access to broadband with speeds of 25 Mbps or greater has grown from nearly 50 percent in 2010 to more than 78 percent in 2012.
- **Technologies:** Cable is the primary technology that providers use to offer services of at least 25 Mbps or greater but less than 1 Gbps. At 3/768, 87 percent of the population has access to broadband via cable, 74 percent get this type of broadband from DSL providers and 20 percent get this broadband from fiber deployments.
- **Rural/Urban:** Almost 100 percent of urban residents have access to download speeds of at least 6 Mbps, while 82 percent of rural communities can access these speeds.
- **Counties:** In almost 59 percent (1,896) of U.S. counties, at least 95 percent of the population has access to speeds of 3/768; and in just under 10 percent (317) of counties, at least 95 percent of the population has access at 25 Mbps.

In the two-year period we examined for this report, it is clear that broadband providers have made significant progress in expanding broadband availability at both the lower and higher end of the speed spectrum. However, we still have a great deal of work to do to ensure that all Americans can take full advantage of the opportunities presented by the digital economy. Here at NTIA, we'll continue to lead as the President's principal advisor on telecommunications and information policy issues and through BTOP, SBI, our work in meeting the President's goal of freeing up 500 MHz of spectrum for mobile broadband, and our many policy and research activities. Over the summer, we'll also update the National Broadband Map (NBM) with data as of December 31, 2012, and publish additional Broadband Briefs that examine other facets of broadband availability.

The report is available at <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/report/2013/us-broadband-availability-june-2010-june-2012> [1]

About the Data: This report uses data from the June 30, 2012, SBI dataset, which is the same data that currently populates the NBM, as well as historical data from June 2010 and June 2011. NTIA, in collaboration with the FCC, and in partnership with all 50 states, five territories and the District of Columbia, updates the SBI data and publishes the NBM twice a year. This report uses data available on the [Data Download](#) [2] and [Developer](#) [3] sections of the NBM, including the [Analyze Table](#) [2] and the [Popular Reports](#) [4].

Topics: [National Broadband Map](#) [5] [Broadband](#) [6]

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[2] <http://www.broadbandmap.gov/data-download>

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