
The State of Digital Equity in America

A comprehensive landscape briefing on federal funding, AI access, broadband policy, and structural disparities — 156 verified facts.

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156 VERIFIED FACTS

The Federal Safety Net Has Collapsed

A comprehensive landscape briefing on America's digital equity crisis

81 million Americans lack broadband at home. The Affordable Connectivity Program has expired. The Digital Equity Act was terminated. And an AI divide is widening the gap faster than policy can respond.

In this briefing, we examine the full landscape of digital equity in America — spanning broadband access, affordability, the AI divide, federal policy disruption, and the communities being left behind.

\$14.2B

What happened to the Affordable Connectivity Program?

\$42.45B

Why has BEAD built zero connections?

81M

Who are the most vulnerable populations — and why?

14x

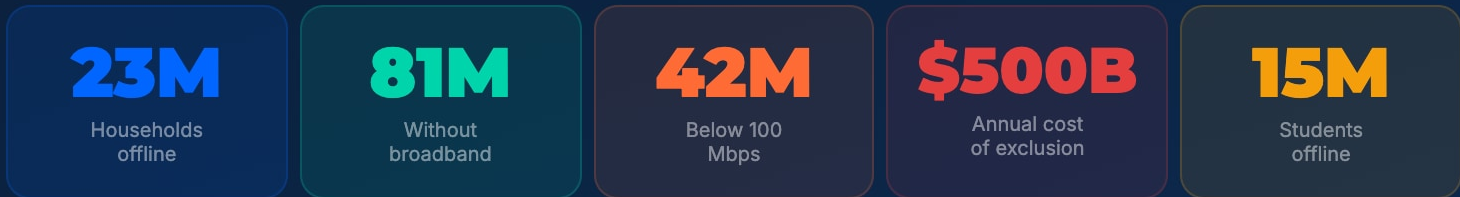
How is the AI divide accelerating existing inequities?

About This Research Briefing

156 verified facts across 12 research domains — the most comprehensive landscape assessment of digital equity in America

The Digital Divide by the Numbers

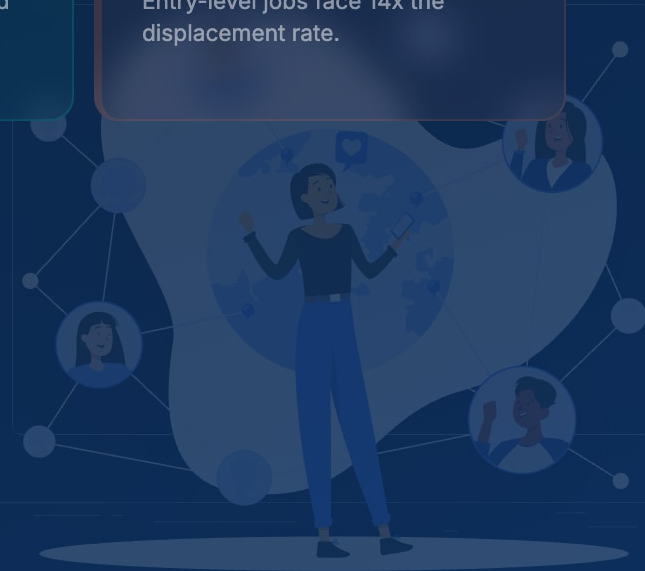
81 million Americans lack broadband at home



Deploy
BEAD allocated \$42.45B for broadband infrastructure but has built zero connections. 56 state proposals submitted, only 29 signed.

Reshape
ACP expired June 2024, cutting subsidies for 23M households. 5M+ disconnected. 40% cut food or utilities to stay online.

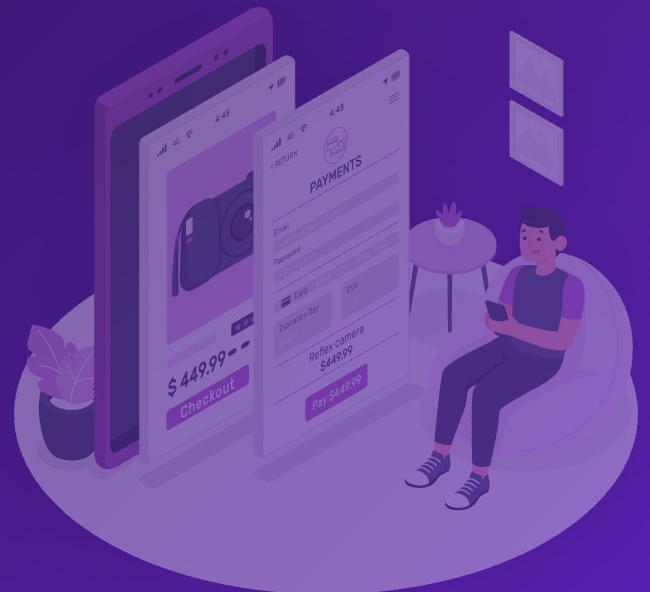
Invent
78% of companies use AI, but only 25% of untrained workers adopt it. Entry-level jobs face 14x the displacement rate.



SECTION ONE

The Affordability Crisis

The Affordable Connectivity Program expired in June 2024, leaving 23 million households without broadband subsidies. The consequences have been immediate and devastating.



The ACP Expired. Millions Lost Access.

Affordable Connectivity Program ended June 1, 2024

✓ ACP ACTIVE • 2022–2024

23M households enrolled

\$30 /month subsidy (\$75 Tribal lands)

95% of subscribers stayed connected

\$14.2B total program investment

△ POST-ACP • JUNE 2024+

5M+ households disconnected

40% cut food or utilities to pay for internet

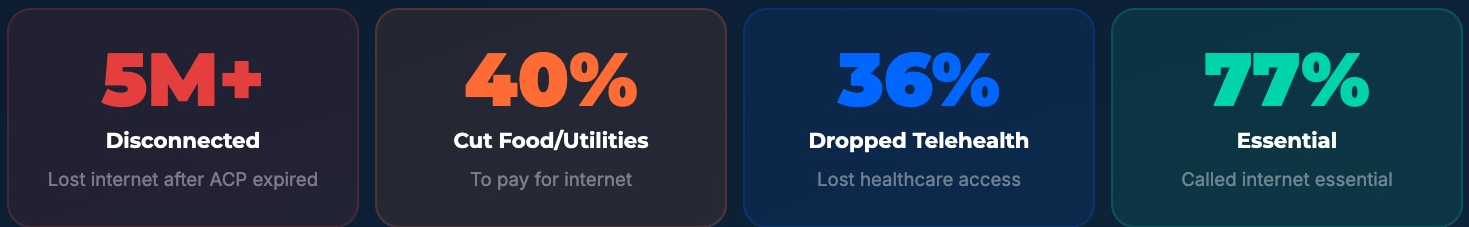
29% reduced education tech for children

36% dropped telehealth

EXPIRED

The Human Cost of Losing Connectivity

Post-ACP impact and bipartisan support for broadband subsidies



BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR BROADBAND SUBSIDIES



Even among Republicans, nearly two-thirds support federal broadband subsidies

Making this one of the most broadly supported policy interventions in America — yet Congress has failed to reauthorize the ACP.

SECTION TWO

The Infrastructure Gap

\$42.45 billion allocated through the BEAD program — the largest broadband investment in U.S. history. As of March 2026, not a single connection has been built.



\$42.45 Billion. Zero Connections.

BEAD program progress through March 2026

56

State/Territory Proposals Submitted

100%

53

Initial Proposals Approved

95%

38

NIST Volume II Compliance

68%

29

Final Proposals Signed

52%

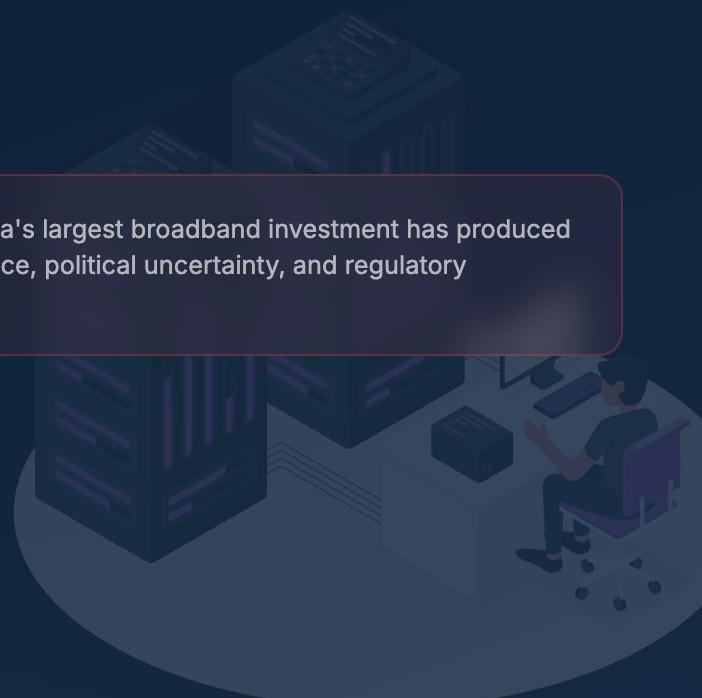
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Connections Built

ZERO

△ CRITICAL

Three years and \$42.45 billion later — America's largest broadband investment has produced zero infrastructure. Delayed by NIST compliance, political uncertainty, and regulatory challenges.



SECTION THREE

The AI Divide

Artificial intelligence is transforming every sector. But without equitable access and training, AI will deepen — not bridge — the digital divide.



The AI Divide Is Accelerating

AI adoption among individuals and organizations worldwide

INDIVIDUAL AI ADOPTION RATE



Using AI



Needs Reskilling

10.6-POINT GAP

between Global North and South AI adoption — mirroring the digital divide

AI Is Accelerating Inequality

Workforce displacement, algorithmic bias, and the training gap

78%

Companies
Using AI

40%

Workforce
Reskilling

14×

Entry-Level
Displacement

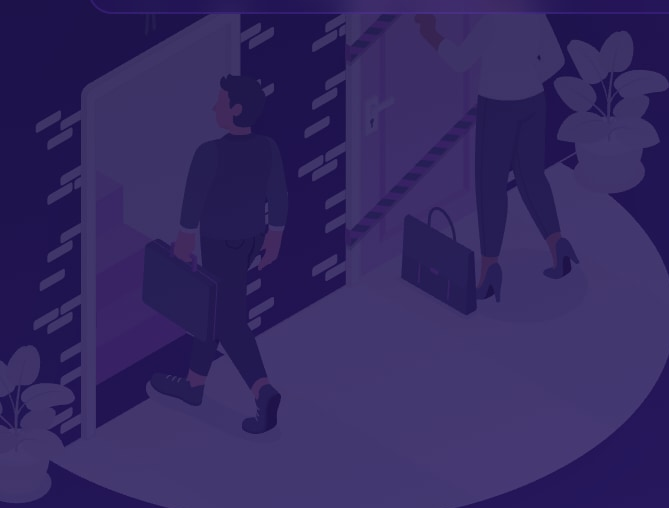
76%

With Training
vs 25% Without

▲ BIAS ALERT AI systems trained on biased data perpetuate structural inequity at scale

Facial recognition error rates are significantly higher for darker-skinned individuals. Workday faces a class-action lawsuit over AI screening bias. Western-centric training data systematically underrepresents the Global South.

Without broadband, disconnected communities **cannot participate in the AI economy** — deepening existing inequalities across race, income, and geography



SECTION FOUR

Policy Under Siege

The Digital Equity Act was terminated. The FCC has been gutted. And BEAD faces existential threats from the new administration.



\$2.75 Billion. Terminated.

Digital Equity Act funding — all programs ended May 2025

\$2.75B

total funding terminated by executive order

\$1.44B

State Capacity Grants
52.4%

\$1.25B

Competitive Grants
45.5%

\$60M

Plan

TERMINATED

DOGE order rescinded all unobligated DEA funds
49 state plans completed — zero implementation funding released

Two years of stakeholder planning across **56 states and territories** — voided overnight

How \$2.75 Billion Was Killed

Digital Equity Act termination timeline

- **May 8, 2025** White House announces "unnecessary programs" termination
- **May 9, 2025** NTIA sends termination letters to all 56 states and territories
- **May-June 2025** 15+ states file objections; legal challenges mount
- **June 24, 2025** Multi-state lawsuit challenges constitutionality of termination

Impact Assessment

All 56 state digital equity plans — developed over 2 years with thousands of stakeholder hours — were voided overnight. States already implementing were forced to halt mid-stream.

\$42.45B allocated — ZERO connections built

Delayed by regulatory challenges, NIST compliance, and political uncertainty. First connections expected mid-2026 at the earliest.

SECTION FIVE

FCC Under Fire

"Delete Delete Delete" — The FCC has cut \$567 million in programs, paused E-Rate cybersecurity funding, and put BEAD's \$42.45 billion at risk.



"Delete Delete Delete" \$57.4 Billion at Risk

FCC Chairman Brendan Carr's regulatory reduction agenda

\$14.2B

Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

23M households lost \$30/mo broadband subsidy — expired June 2024

EXPIRED

\$42.45B

BEAD Program

Zero connections built; DOGE review underway; states scrambling

AT RISK

\$567M

Lifeline Program

\$9.25/mo phone/internet subsidy; FCC proposing phase-out

CUT

\$200M

E-Rate Cybersecurity Pilot

School and library cybersecurity; paused indefinitely

PAUSED

TOTAL
AT RISK

\$57.4B

in federal connectivity funding eliminated, paused, or at risk under the current administration

Top States Affected by DEA Termination

State-level impact of Digital Equity Act funding elimination

\$181.4M

California

3.2M households unserved — 12 programs halted — Digital navigators, device lending

\$148.7M

Texas

2.8M households unserved — 9 programs halted — Rural broadband, multilingual support

\$112.3M

New York

1.9M households unserved — 8 programs halted — Public housing, digital skills

\$103.8M

Florida

1.7M households unserved — 7 programs halted — Senior literacy, telehealth

\$78.2M

Pennsylvania

1.1M households unserved — 6 programs halted — Rural centers, workforce training

\$71.9M

Illinois

980K households unserved — 5 programs halted — South Side Chicago connectivity

56

states and territories had approved Digital Equity plans — **all voided** by the termination order

SECTION SIX

Who Gets Left Behind

The digital divide is not random. It follows the fault lines of income, race, geography, age, and disability — concentrating harm on communities already facing systemic disadvantage.



The Income Connectivity Gap

Home broadband adoption rate by annual household income



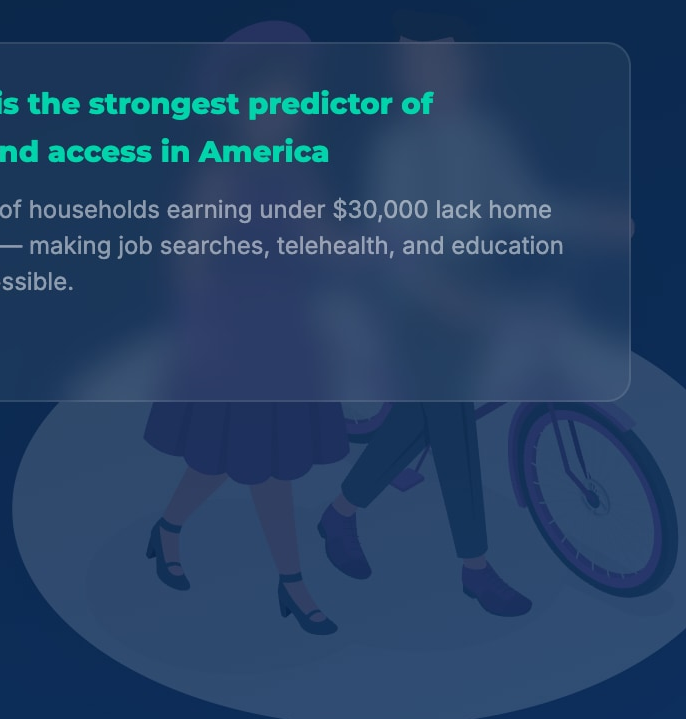
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POINT GAP

between highest and lowest income groups

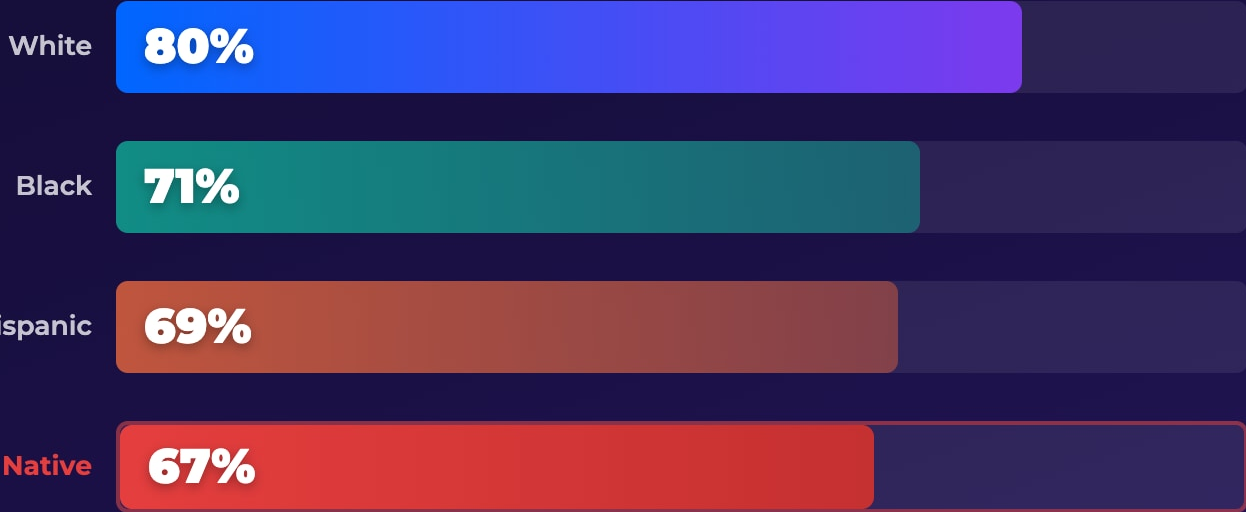
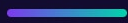
Income is the strongest predictor of broadband access in America

Nearly half of households earning under \$30,000 lack home broadband — making job searches, telehealth, and education nearly impossible.



Racial Disparities in Broadband

Percentage of households with home broadband subscription

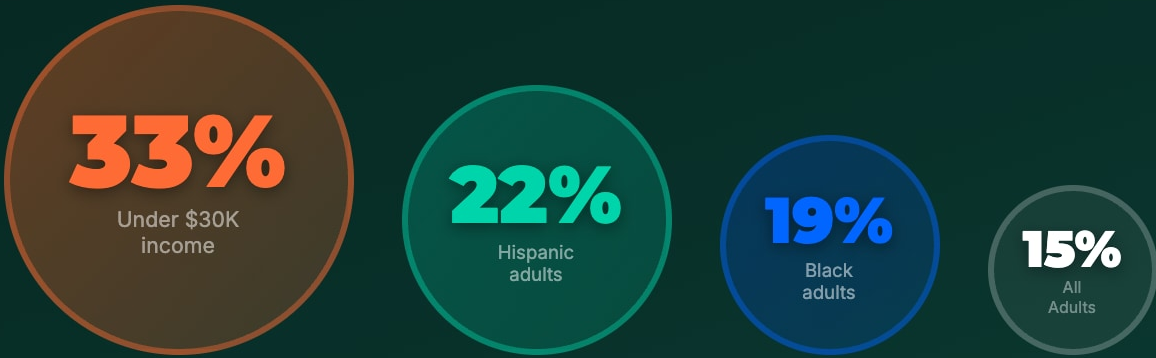


Broadband gaps mirror America's racial wealth gap

Communities of color are systematically underserved, paying higher prices per Mbps in many markets due to digital redlining by ISPs.

Smartphone-Only Internet Access

Share of adults who rely solely on smartphones — no home broadband



1 in 3 Low Income Adults

rely solely on smartphones — no home broadband, no desktop, no laptop. Job applications, homework, and telehealth become nearly impossible.

Mobile ≠ Broadband

Smartphone-only users face data caps, small screens, and limited functionality. Mobile access perpetuates a second-class internet experience.



Race, Geography & Digital Redlining

The intersection of race and geography in the digital divide

In the rural Black South, the digital divide reaches its most extreme. The gap follows the same fault lines as every other systemic disparity in America.

38% **Black rural households lack internet**
versus 23% of white rural households — a 15-point racial gap

<50% **Tribal lands broadband penetration**
\$2.24B awarded, only ~\$500M drawn down

HIGHER PRICES **Digital redlining by ISPs**
Black households pay more per Mbps in many markets

Digital Redlining

ISPs systematically underinvest in infrastructure serving communities of color, creating a modern form of redlining that denies equitable broadband access based on neighborhood racial composition.

The digital divide follows the **same fault lines** as every other systemic disparity — income, race, geography, age, and disability

SECTION SEVEN

Health & Education at Risk

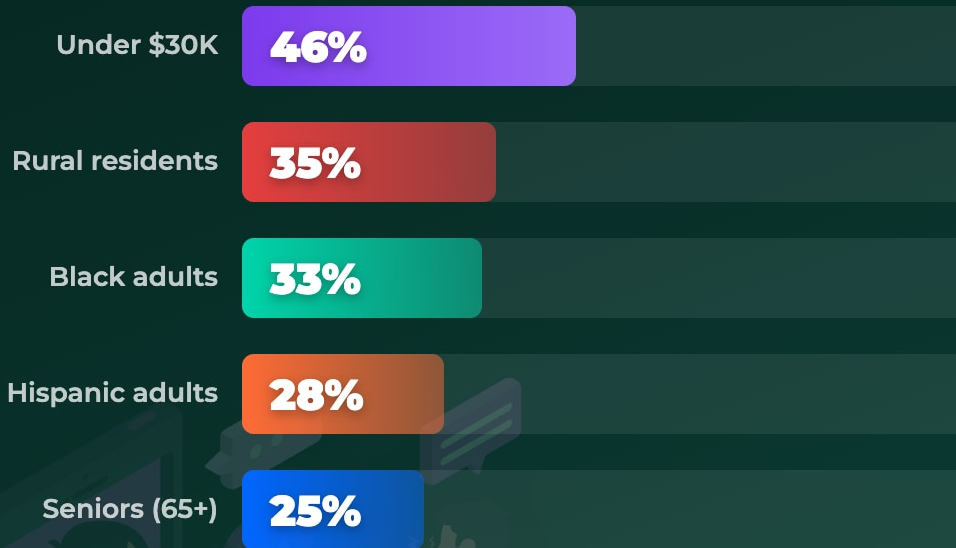
When broadband fails, healthcare and education fail with it. Telehealth access, remote learning, and digital literacy are all casualties of the connectivity crisis.



The Telehealth Divide

Communities most at risk of losing telehealth access

LACK ADEQUATE BROADBAND FOR TELEHEALTH



36%

of ACP recipients

used the subsidy for telehealth access

Health Equity at Risk

Telehealth became a lifeline during COVID-19. Without broadband, vulnerable populations lose access to virtual healthcare.

The Homework Gap 15 Million Students Left Behind

Despite pandemic-era investments, millions of K-12 students still cannot reliably complete homework, attend virtual classes, or access digital learning tools from home.

15M

Students Offline

Lack internet or adequate devices for remote learning

75%

Can't Afford Tech

Of disconnected families cite cost as the primary barrier

3x

Achievement Gap

Students without home internet are 3x more likely to fall behind

2.3M

E-Rate Impacted

Students affected by paused E-Rate cybersecurity funding

DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT

34%

Black Students
No Home Internet

30%

Hispanic Students
No Home Internet

35%

Rural Students
No Home Internet

18%

White Students
No Home Internet



America ranks #15 in fixed broadband and #32 in fiber penetration among OECD nations

South Korea's fiber rate is 89.6% versus America's 23.1%

SECTION EIGHT

America vs. The World

How the United States compares to peer nations in broadband infrastructure, fiber deployment, and mobile connectivity.



U.S. Broadband: OECD Rankings

United States vs. 38 OECD member nations

15

Fixed Broadband Penetration

Middle of the pack among developed economies



32

Fiber Penetration — BOTTOM QUARTILE

U.S. fiber deployment dramatically trails global leaders



2

Mobile Broadband — NEAR TOP

Strong mobile, but mobile ≠ equitable fixed broadband

160.5 per 100 inhabitants

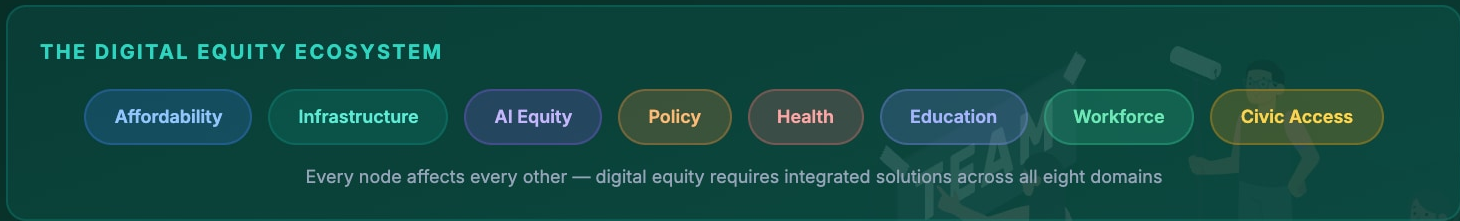
The U.S. leads in mobile but ranks #32 in fiber — the infrastructure of the future

South Korea's fiber rate is 89.6% vs. America's 23.1%. The U.S. is building yesterday's broadband while the world builds tomorrow's.

Technology as a Social Determinant of Health

AGI Affinity's TSDOH framework recognizes technology access as foundational to health, education, economic mobility, and civic participation.

- 1 Restore Affordability**
Reauthorize ACP or equivalent — **23M households** need subsidies to maintain connectivity
- 2 Accelerate BEAD**
Streamline deployment — **zero connections built** from \$42.45B allocation is unacceptable
- 3 Bridge the AI Divide**
Equitable AI training, **bias audits**, inclusive development across all communities



156 verified facts across 12 research domains — this briefing represents the most **comprehensive landscape assessment** of digital equity in America



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