

Nebraska County Broadband Fact Sheets

Data Sources and Discussion Guide

Nebraska County Broadband Fact Sheets can be used to help start community, county-wide or regional discussions about broadband availability, adoption, and digital inclusion. This sheet provides information on the data sources and their limitations. Suggested discussion questions are also provided.

Broadband Data Availability

Data Source: FCC Broadband Map (<https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov>) using June 2018 Form 477 data. These figures do not include broadband availability via mobile broadband or satellite. Using Form 477, fixed broadband providers report the type of technology and maximum advertised speeds in Mbps up and down by census block to the FCC. The use of census block reporting can overstate broadband availability in large census blocks. However, steps are being taken to improve reporting of broadband availability. The FCC's Digital Opportunity Data Collection program which was approved on August 1, 2019 and federal legislation being considered would largely address the shortcomings of the current fixed broadband data collection method.

For a map of broadband availability using Form 477 data, go to broadbandmap.nebraska.gov. To see a map of the area and to select layers, click on the layers button in the lower left hand corner and select the layers you would like displayed.

Discussion Questions

- Does this data look accurate? Does it overstate or understate broadband availability?
- Is your county near, above or below the state average?
- Are there areas that are unserved (lack service of at least 10 Mbps down/1 Mbps up) or underserved (lack service of at least 25 Mbps down/3 Mbps up)?
- Are members of the county or region willing to work together to improve broadband availability?

Broadband Subscription and Adoption

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Data available at <https://factfinder.census.gov/>. These figures include those who subscribe to cable, fiber optic, or DSL, satellite, fixed wireless subscription, or mobile broadband plans. Internet faster than dial-up is considered broadband.

For some counties with small populations, the margin of error for broadband subscription data is significant. The Nebraska counties with the largest margin of error are McPherson (9.5), Loup (8.6), Hooker (8.4), Sioux (8.3), Hayes (7.3), Blaine (6.2), Kimball (6.1) and Banner (6.0).

According to the 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, the percent of the population with a broadband internet subscription in McPherson County is 71.8% with a margin of error of 9.5%. The Census Bureau is reasonably confident that the percent of population in McPherson County with a broadband internet subscription is 71.8% + or – 9.5% or between 62.3% and 81.3%. The Census Bureau

uses a 90% confidence rate, meaning that if they sampled the population 100 times, 90 times the results would be within this range.

Discussion Questions

- Does this data look accurate? Does it overstate or understate broadband subscription rates?
- Is your county near, above or below the state average?
- What could be done to improve broadband subscription rates?
- Are there places where those without internet access can go to access the internet?
- Are there opportunities to learn about technology in the community, county, or region?
- Are there programs in the community, county, or region which address digital inclusion?
Examples include hot spot lending programs, Wi-Fi on buses, or TV white space deployments for student access on school-issued devices.

Library Broadband

Source: Nebraska Library Commission. **Note:** Not all Nebraska libraries provided data to the Nebraska Library Commission. Each year the Nebraska Library Commission collects statistical data from all Nebraska public libraries as part of a national survey, including questions about technology. Using this data, a map of the broadband speeds of public libraries in Nebraska, sorted by libraries that are served (speed of 24 Mbps and above), Underserved (12+ to 24 Mbps), and Unserved (0-12 Mbps), is available at <https://www.zeemaps.com/view?group=3581041&x=-99.750036&y=41.752572&z=11>

The persons per megabit index is a brief overview of whether or not the download speed offered by the library is likely to meet the needs of the community. The number is calculated by taking the legal service area of the library (LSA – the number of people in the geographic area for which a public library offers services) divided by the high end of the reported speed range. A low index number tends to indicate a library is better prepared to meet the community needs, while a high number tends to suggest the opposite.

Discussion Questions

- Do community members feel that the library is offering adequate broadband access for those who lack internet access?
- Is the maximum download speed reported by the local library correct?
- Is faster service available in the community or county? If so, why isn't the library subscribing to a faster service?
- If the local library isn't applying for E-Rate, what barriers have prevented the library from applying?
- What could the city, county, library board, library director, and community members do to improve library broadband?
- Does the library offer free Wi-Fi? How important are fast and reliable Wi-Fi connections?
- What are the benefits to the community if the library broadband speed is improved? What is the impact of increased broadband speed?