LEAVING MONEY on the TABLE: **The ACP's Expiration Means Billions in Lost Savings**

John B. Horrigan, PhD
Benton Institute for Broadband & Society Senior Fellow

July 2024

SUMMARY

The end of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) may result in millions of households either eliminating or downgrading broadband service. This, in turn, could mean over $2 billion in lost consumer financial benefits and service delivery efficiencies for health care providers.

Nearly half of ACP households surveyed reported that they might either cut off service or choose a cheaper (and lower-quality) plan without the $30 ACP subsidy. Specifically:

- **13 percent** of ACP households said they would disconnect their home service without ACP subsidies. That is approximately 3 million households.
- **36 percent** (or 8.3 million households) said they would downgrade to a cheaper or slower plan.

The potential for service termination post-ACP could have significant economic consequences. More than half (55 percent) of ACP households said that being without home service would have a major impact on their ability to purchase items at an affordable price. This could translate into as much as $1.5 billion annually in lost financial benefits from e-commerce for low-income households that used the ACP.

A similar dynamic unfolds for telehealth visits and the forgone cost savings from less telehealth usage. Three in five (60 percent) respondents who used the ACP said that, in the prior three months, they had had an online appointment with a health care provider for a physical or mental health issue. Assuming that households who cut off service once the ACP ends move from telehealth to in-person visits, lost savings for health care service providers could approach $800 million annually.

The survey also demonstrates that the ACP has put a significant dent in the digital divide in several ways by:

- **EXPANDING HOME BROADBAND ADOPTION:** Among ACP households who used the subsidy for a wireline service, 20 percent said it was for a new wireline service for their home.
- **SUSTAINING SERVICE IN THE FACE OF AFFORDABILITY ISSUES:** Some 20 percent of those who have endured broadband service disconnection attributed service lapses to struggles paying their bill. Nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of low-income households said affordable housing is a problem where they live, and half would struggle with an unexpected expense. For them, a service subsidy or discount can keep service on consistently.
- **HELPING TO BOLSTER WIRELESS ACCESS**: Some 22 percent of ACP enrollees who chose wireless service used the subsidy to add a new mobile data plan for a member of the household.

The survey also explored the ACP and the impact of its expiration on the "covered populations" identified in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Some highlights:

- **PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES** were among the greatest beneficiaries of the ACP, especially for adding home wireline connections. Some 36 percent of respondents who identified as disabled used the ACP (versus 22 percent for all other respondents). And 24 percent of all respondents with a disability used it for a new wireline home connection, versus 17 percent for all others.

- **RURAL HOUSEHOLDS** were as likely to use the ACP as all others. Some 27 percent of surveyed non-metro residents said they enrolled in the ACP, compared with 26 percent for all other respondents.

- **BLACK AMERICANS** were more likely to have enrolled in the ACP, as 31 percent of those surveyed said they enrolled in the benefit plan.

- **HISPANICS** were more likely to say that the ACP's end will result in them downgrading service; some 45 percent said this compared with 34 percent of all others.

- **HOUSEHOLDS NEAR THE POVERTY LINE** (i.e., annual incomes below $20,000) were also more likely than others to enroll in the ACP, as 33 percent signed up for the subsidy. Some 27 percent of these households used the ACP for new wireline subscriptions. And nearly one in five (18 percent) of the lowest-income households said they would cancel service upon the ACP's expiration—twice the rate of other ACP households (9 percent).

Broadband affordability is a widespread problem for low-income households. The survey finds that 43 percent of low-income households are subscription vulnerable—meaning they have lost service because of difficulty paying broadband bills, find it very difficult to afford service, or live at or near the poverty line. And over half of low-income households surveyed said that affording their monthly internet service fee is either very (11 percent) or somewhat (42 percent) difficult.

Additionally, the survey illuminates what people pay for home broadband service. When households with unbundled (i.e., standalone) broadband service were asked what their monthly bill is, the average figure given was $66.53. However, when asked what price level they consider too expensive, 56 percent of respondents said a monthly bill up to $75 was too expensive. In other words, many low-income households pay a monthly internet bill that is outside the comfort zone of what their budgets can handle.

These findings come from a representative sample of 2,535 households whose annual incomes are $50,000 or less. The survey, conducted in April 2024, found that 26 percent of households in the sample were at the time enrolled in the ACP. The survey did not attempt to screen respondents by whether they fit ACP eligibility criteria; rather, it simply asked people if they were aware of the program. If they said they were, they received a follow-up question about whether they had enrolled in the ACP. Some 59 percent of all respondents said they had heard of the ACP, and, among those, 44 percent had enrolled. This comes to 26 percent of all survey respondents saying they had enrolled in the ACP.

OVERVIEW

The end of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) will put budgetary pressure on many U.S. households as they adapt to the termination of the $30-per-month subsidy for internet service. By February 2024, some 23 million households had enrolled in the ACP. The subsidy enabled at-home internet connectivity for millions of low-income households, while mitigating service interruptions for millions more. Without the ACP, some of this progress will be reversed, either through service disconnection or households opting for less costly (and lower-quality) service plans.

This survey shows the impact of the ACP's end on low-income households. Half of ACP households surveyed said that immediately after the end of the program, they will suffer from service termination or have to switch to less costly or lower-speed plans. Among households enrolled in the ACP:

- **41 percent** said they would continue with their service while cutting other household expenses.
- **36 percent** said they would downgrade to a cheaper or slower service plan.
- **13 percent** said they would cancel their home service altogether.

Nearly half (49 percent) of ACP households could, with the benefit expiring, either lose service or have lower-quality service than they had before. That is roughly 11.3 million households (using the end-of-program figure of 23 million enrolled ACP households as the baseline). In addition, 3 million households may cancel their home service with the program expiring.

Beyond the impacts on home internet connectivity in the near term, the survey shows how low-income households have abiding concerns about internet affordability, while also illuminating the costs of lost connectivity from ACP households who cancel service.

I. WORRIES ABOUT AFFORDABILITY

Even though 91 percent of survey respondents have a wireline internet subscription at home, there are real worries about the affordability of service.

The survey asked people what they pay per month for standalone home broadband service. The average figure cited was $66.53 per month. Yet when asked what they consider to be too expensive a price to pay for service, 56 percent cited monthly bills of up to $75. This means many households who pay for service find it a strain on their household budgets. More than half (53 percent) say that it is difficult for them to pay their monthly broadband service fee. This shows a gap between what people pay and what they feel comfortable paying. Here are more specific data:

DIFFICULTY WITH THE EXISTING MONTHLY INTERNET BILL: More than half (53 percent) of all respondents said that it is either very (11 percent) or somewhat (42 percent) difficult to pay for their monthly internet service in addition to other household expenses. A household's other financial stressors further underscore this point. Half (50 percent) of respondents said that they would find it very difficult to cope with an unexpected expense on the order of $500, such as an auto repair or medical expense. Among those who said this, 70 percent said that their internet bill was either very (19 percent) or somewhat (51 percent) difficult to handle.

PRICE SENSITIVITY TO A $30 PRICE INCREASE: When presented with the possibility of a price hike, one in five (19 percent) of non-ACP low-income households said that they would cancel their home internet service if the monthly service fee increased by $30. Some 44 percent would downgrade service to a less costly option, and 31 percent would continue with their current service.

DISCONNECTION: Service interruption is not uncommon; 54 percent of respondents said that their service has been interrupted in the past. Within the group of those experiencing service interruption, 20 percent said that it was due to either service being too expensive, a carrier disconnecting due to unpaid bills, or price increases that made service unaffordable.

WHAT PEOPLE PAY AND WHAT'S TOO EXPENSIVE: To further understand people's attitudes about service affordability, the survey asked low-income households what they pay for service and what monthly fee they view as too expensive to consider. When respondents who do not bundle their home internet service with other services (such as video) were asked what they pay per month, the average figure cited was $66.53. That figure is in line with the $60 BroadbandNow cites as a typical monthly fee for internet service, although BroadbandNow notes that faster speeds may cost more and that some special offers may start at $55 and increase to $65 after a year.

The survey asked people to identify, within ranges of price points, what they consider too expensive for a monthly broadband fee. The table below shows the results for all respondents.

AT WHAT MONTHLY PRICE WOULD YOU CONSIDER a HOME BROADBAND SUBSCRIPTION to be TOO EXPENSIVE to CONSIDER?	ALL RESPONDENTS	ACP PARTICIPANTS
$1 to $20	4%	5%
$21 to $40	12%	16%
$41 to $60	18%	23%
$61 to $75	22%	22%
$76 to $100	21%	18%
$101+	23%	16%

One-third (34 percent) of low-income households said that the "typical" price of $60 per month (or less) is too expensive for their household budgets. (The 34-percent figure is the sum of all respondents saying prices of either $1 to $20 per month, $21 to $40, or $41 to 60 would be too expensive.) And 56 percent say $75 or less is too much. Yet half of low-income households pay more than $60 per month for service, indicating that, for many, broadband service imposes a strain on the household budget.

The table also shows that ACP participants are a bit more price sensitive: 44 percent say that a broadband bill of $60 is too much.

In both cases, the entry-level monthly broadband bill is seen as unaffordable for many low-income households, and plans that cost only slightly more appear out of reach to a majority of low-income households—and ACP participants.

Asking people what they pay for service permits examination of what different categories of households pay. Not surprisingly, very-low-income households opt for the least expensive plans, with households making less than $20,000 annually reporting a $61-per-month bill, while those whose annual incomes are between $20,000 and $50,000 report paying $70 per month. Notably, rural households have higher monthly wireline bills, as those households report paying $72 per month for broadband, compared with $65 for households in all other areas.

The average wireline monthly broadband bill for a household participating in the ACP is $52. For households using ACP subsidies for a new wireline connection, the average bill was $35, indicating that (on average) the subsidy defrayed costs for service plans that cost about $65 per month. For those using it to pay for an existing service, the monthly fee was $58. Some 8 percent of ACP wireline households report paying $10 or less monthly for service, and 20 percent report paying $20 or less.

These figures suggest the following about the role of the ACP:

1. **For new broadband subscribers,** the ACP defrayed a portion of the cost of a market-rate, entry-level plan—ACP households purchasing new connections pay about $30 less than the average rate low-income households pay.

2. **For existing wireline broadband customers who use the ACP**, many were paying for service that costs around $85 per month. That figure is above what entry-level plans typically cost, but there is research that shows that low-income households do pay for expensive service in order to ensure that service is of sufficient quality to meet household needs.[1] In situations such as these, the ACP offers cost relief to homes stretching their budgets for an internet subscription that may be the only available option suitable to their needs.

II. SUBSCRIPTION VULNERABILITY

As the preceding discussion shows, low-income households who have internet service often struggle with paying the bill, with some subject to occasional loss of service. In light of this, the ACP is not only a tool to help the disconnected get online; it is also a tool to help low-income households who have service stay online. The term to capture this dynamic is "subscription vulnerability"—that is, the degree to which low-income households struggle to maintain internet service at home on a consistent basis. Limited disposable income or an unexpected expense can force households to make choices on other expenditures—and sometimes home internet service falls on the chopping block.

The findings of this survey offer a trend update on the share of low-income households that fall into the "subscription vulnerable" category. When first introduced in 2021 in survey research conducted for Everyone On, about half (49 percent) of low-income households were subscription vulnerable.[2] Both the 2021 and 2024 surveys had nationally representative samples of households whose annual incomes were $50,000 or less and had the same questions on internet affordability.

The subscription-vulnerability measure is the share of all respondents who:

1. **Say it is very difficult to pay for service.**
2. **Have had their service disconnected** due to unpaid bills, a price increase that put service out of reach, or a determination that the monthly bill is too high.
3. **Have incomes of $20,000 or less** (that is, they are at or near the federal poverty line).

Overall, 43 percent of low-income households in 2024 are subscription vulnerable, falling into one or more of the three categories listed above. This comes to approximately 19 million households in the United States that are subscription vulnerable.[3] That is less than the 49-percent figure from 2021, suggesting that the ACP has helped alleviate subscription vulnerability to a degree since then.

Other data from the survey show how household budgetary pressures interact with using the ACP benefit and subscription vulnerability. For broader budget strains, the surveyed were asked:

- **Whether it would be difficult for their household to handle an unexpected expense,** such as a car or medical bill, that cost about $500, and,
- **Whether affordable housing is a problem** in their community, regardless of whether it is a problem for them.

Half (50 percent) said an unexpected expense of $500 would be very difficult for them to handle, and 72 percent regarded the affordability of housing as a major problem in their local community. Four in ten (41 percent) said both of these issues were a problem for them, suggesting that a significant number of lower-income households may make ends meet, but not with a lot of comfort. For these respondents:

- **36 percent** used the ACP subsidy.
- **19 percent** said they would cancel service without the subsidy (compared with 13 percent of all ACP users).
- **38 percent** said they would downgrade service absent ACP subsidies.
- **58 percent** fall into the "subscription vulnerable" category.

Participation in government benefit programs beyond ACP is also reflective of a tight household budget, and the survey asked whether people participated in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the child tax credit. Some 43 percent said they participate in SNAP, and 22 percent used the child tax credit in the prior year. For those who had participated in either of those programs:

- **38 percent** were enrolled in the ACP.
- **15 percent** said they would cancel service without ACP subsidies.
- **37 percent** said they would downgrade service in the face of the program's end.
- **58 percent** are subscription vulnerable.

A final indicator of the importance of the ACP to households on a tight budget comes from asking people whether they have lost either their Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) benefits in the prior two years. These benefits were expanded during the pandemic but expired in many places when federal funds were exhausted. Some 15 percent of lower-income households said they experienced this, indicating that health care costs for their families may have increased. Among these:

- **42 percent** said they had participated in the ACP.
- **21 percent** said they would cancel their home service once the benefit ended.
- **40 percent** said they would downgrade their service to a less expensive plan.
- **53 percent** are subscription vulnerable.

Households with other budgetary challenges are not only more likely to have enrolled in the ACP but also to be subscription vulnerable. As noted, nearly three in five (58 percent) of households who live in areas with expensive housing and cannot handle an unexpected bill are subscription vulnerable. The ACP subsidy can offer some relief to these households and make it easier to maintain connectivity in the face of economic difficulty.

III. THE COST and CONSEQUENCES of the ACP's DEMISE

The end of the Affordable Connectivity Program means that half of households enrolled in the program may suffer from service termination or have to switch to less costly or lower-speed plans. Losing or downgrading service diminishes what people can do online. The survey asked not just what low-income households do online but also how losing service for an extended period of time would impact them. Here's what low-income households said they have used the internet for in the past three months:

- **93 percent** shop or research products online.
- **86 percent** have made or received payments online using an online banking or financial services application.
- **52 percent** have used the internet for an online appointment with a health care provider for a physical or mental health issue.
- **49 percent** have gone online to learn about, apply for, or renew a government benefit.
- **34 percent** have used the internet for homework or to communicate with a student's school
- **30 percent** have worked at home using the internet.
- **25 percent** have taken an online course to enhance job skills or get a work certification.
- **18 percent** have used the internet to contact their local government or community group about a problem in their neighborhood.

The practical uses of the internet play a large role in what low-income households do online. When asked how losing service for an extended period of time (a month or more) would impact their lives, respondents emphasized practical uses such as shopping and working at home—but also the social and time-management dimensions of the internet's utility.

Here is what they said when asked how much losing service would affect their lives:

ACTIVITY	A LOT	SOMEWHAT	NOT VERY MUCH	NOT AT ALL
STAY IN TOUCH with FAMILY and FRIENDS	42%	32%	14%	11%
PURCHASE ITEMS at an AFFORDABLE PRICE	41%	33%	17%	9%
SAVE TIME in CARRYING OUT DAY-TO-DAY ACTIVITIES	36%	37%	17%	10%
MANAGE HEALTH CARE for YOURSELF or OTHERS	29%	33%	21%	17%
DO YOUR JOB	27%	18%	15%	40%
DO SCHOOLWORK or COMMUNICATE with TEACHERS or SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS	25%	12%	9%	54%

The commercial and social uses are roughly equal in how people rate what the loss of internet access would mean to them. Of note, respondents rated the time-saving impacts of losing service at nearly the same level as shopping online and staying in touch with others. It is also worth observing that many respondents neither are enrolled in school nor have children in school; this is why 54 percent of all respondents said losing service would have no impact on schoolwork or communications with schools.

Knowing how respondents have used the internet in the prior three months illuminates the consequences of some households losing service as a result of the ACP's end.

Telehealth sessions, for instance, save health care providers money relative to in-person visits. A recent study estimates that the savings per visit range from $147 to $186.[4] One study has offered estimates as low as $93 savings per visit for low-acuity virtual care and $141 less expensive per visit than an in-person urgent-care visit.[5] An upper-range estimate for telehealth's savings is $242 per visit.[6] A lower- to mid-range estimate of the cost savings from telehealth—$150 per visit—will serve to capture the cost to health care providers of some patients losing connectivity at home and thus the means to have telehealth appointments.

The survey provides two key data points for developing an estimate of how the ACP's end may raise service delivery costs for health care providers. One is the incidence of using telehealth. Some 60 percent of ACP respondents said they had had a telehealth appointment in the prior three months, a figure higher than the 52-percent figure for all respondents. The other is how many ACP households said they will disconnect service: 13 percent. If the analysis focuses on wireline ACP households—75 percent in this sample, or about 17.25 million households—10.35 million ACP households had a telehealth appointment in the prior three months. If the 13 percent of ACP households who said they will cancel service when the program ends have zero telehealth appointments, this means that there would be 1.34 million fewer household telehealth appointments in a given three-month period.

Fewer telehealth visits mean less cost savings for health care providers—to the tune of $150 per visit for 1.34 million appointments in a three-month period. If all of those would-be virtual visits become in-person visits, the forgone cost savings to healthcare providers would be $807 million over a 12-month period.

NUMBER of ACP WIRELINE HOUSEHOLDS	17,250,000
ACP WIRELINE HOUSEHOLDS that had a TELEHEALTH APPOINTMENT in PRIOR THREE MONTHS (60%)	10,350,000
ACP WIRELINE HOUSEHOLDS with TELEHEALTH VISIT in PRIOR THREE MONTHS AFTER PROGRAM ENDS (assumes 13% service cancellation and no telehealth visits among households who cancel service)	9,004,500
DIFFERENCE in NUMBER of TELEHEALTH VISITS	1,345,500
DIFFERENCE in DOLLAR SAVINGS (at $150 saving per visit) for THREE-MONTH PERIOD	$ 201,825,000
DIFFERENCE in DOLLAR SAVINGS (at $150 saving per visit) for 12-MONTH PERIOD	$ 807,300,000

This $807 million figure depends on assumptions that are important to understand. It assumes that all households that cancel their home service due to the ACP's end cease having telehealth appointments. That may be a strong assumption, though some may find a way to have telehealth visits using other means (e.g., going to a local public library). The estimate also assumes that in-person appointments replace forgone telehealth visits. Relaxing those assumptions would introduce other costs that are hard to quantify. Households who have canceled service post-ACP would have to go to the time and effort to use resources at a library or elsewhere to keep a telehealth appointment. If a lost telehealth visit is not offset by an in-person appointment, the benefit of the health care intervention is forgone. All this means the $807 million figure could be a high-end estimate.

At the same time, the survey's question asked whether the respondent had had a telehealth visit in the prior three months, not how many visits. If there were multiple telehealth appointments, then there would be more lost visits resulting from the ACP's termination than the analysis above shows, and thus a larger amount of lost benefits from the program's end.

A similar exercise is possible for assessing e-commerce for ACP households. Prior analysis has shown that e-commerce creates about $1,285 in annual benefits for low-income households resulting from greater convenience and access to a wider range of goods to meet household needs.[7] Newly connected wireline ACP households benefit from the e-commerce pathway the benefit creates for them. But just as the ACP opens these doors, the program's end may close them for some households.

As the numbers above show, 93 percent of all respondents said that in the prior three months they used the internet to shop or research products. And a strong majority (74 percent) said that losing internet service would have a significant impact (either "a lot" or "somewhat") on their ability to purchase items at an affordable cost. Note further that 73 percent said losing internet service would make it harder to save time on day-to-day activities, which would include shopping.

These numbers are more striking for ACP households:

- **95 percent** said that they used the internet in the prior three months to shop or research products.
- **82 percent** said that being without internet service would impact their ability to buy products at an affordable price "a lot" (55 percent) or "somewhat" (27 percent).
- **82 percent** said that being without internet service would impact their ability to save time on day-to-day activities "a lot" (48 percent) or "somewhat" (34 percent).

A conservative way to estimate the falloff in e-commerce's benefits to ACP households that lose internet service is to focus on those who say losing service would impact "a lot" their ability to buy products at an affordable price. That is 55 percent of ACP households. If we assume that this set of respondents may curb their e-commerce behavior if they cancel service post-ACP, then, using the $1,285 annual e-commerce benefit figure, it is possible to estimate the cost of this change in purchasing behavior.

The following table walks through the impacts, which assume that e-commerce benefits are 13 percent lower (i.e., the potential 13 percent service cancellation rate) for the 55 percent of ACP households who say their online purchasing behavior would be impacted a lot by a service lapse.

NUMBER of ACP WIRELINE HOUSEHOLDS	**17,250,000**
ACP WIRELINE HOUSEHOLDS for whom a SERVICE GAP WOULD MATTER A LOT to E-COMMERCE BEHAVIOR (55%)	**9,487,500**
NUMBER of HOUSEHOLDS USING E-COMMERCE ONCE the ACP ENDS (assuming 13% lower due to service cancellation)	**8,254,125**
DIFFERENCE in NUMBER of HOUSEHOLDS USING E-COMMERCE	**1,233,375**
DIFFERENCE in DOLLAR BENEFITS ANNUALLY (at $1,285 annual impact)	**$ 1,572,553,125**

One takeaway from this is to recognize that the impacts of the ACP's termination, on a percentage basis, do not have to be large for the dollar value of the impacts to be substantial. If 17.25 million households use the ACP for a wireline benefit, and 13 percent say they will cancel home service without the subsidy, then that is 2.25 million fewer households with a key tool for telehealth. For online shopping, the analysis posits a smaller impact. In either case, there will be less of each.

The analysis here suggests that this impact will be in excess of $2 billion annually. Specifically, between telehealth and e-commerce, the impact of the ACP's termination could approach $2.4 billion. This includes additional costs to health care providers resulting from fewer telehealth appointments and lower levels of benefits to households from e-commerce, as those who cancel service post-ACP would engage in less online shopping.

IV. COVERED POPULATIONS

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act directed the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to pay special attention to covered populations in considering investments in digital equity. Covered populations are defined as:

- **Aging individuals (ages 60 and above)**
- **Incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a federal correctional facility**
- **Veterans**
- **Individuals with disabilities**
- **Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who are English learners and who have low levels of literacy**

- **Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group**
- **Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area**
- **Individuals in households whose incomes do not exceed 150 percent of the federal poverty level**

This survey finds some variations across covered populations in ACP participation, how beneficiaries used the ACP, consequences of the program's end, and even how monthly internet bills vary across covered populations.

a. GEOGRAPHY

The survey provided geographic information in four categories of respondents, and the table below shows how results for questions pertaining to ACP play out. Some 39 percent of respondents are from center city areas, with 45 percent living in either areas classified as suburban or counties that include a substantial portion of core urban areas. Some 15 percent live in non-metro or rural areas.

	ALL	USE ACP (% ALL)	WIRELINE	NEW WIRE	CANCEL	DOWN-GRADE	PAY (UN-BUNDLE)
CENTER CITY	39%	29%	78%	25%	14%	34%	$62
COUNTY w/ URBAN CORE	32%	25%	75%	16%	14%	36%	$68
SUBURBAN	13%	25%	73%	13%	11%	33%	$70
NON-METRO	15%	27%	68%	16%	11%	44%	$72

Rural residents generally pay more for broadband than their counterparts in other areas (especially center city areas). Although rural residents are modestly less likely to cancel service with the ACP's end, they are more likely to downgrade service quality. Notably, rural residents are about as likely to use the ACP as respondents in other geographies.

b. RACE and ETHNICITY

The survey's sample size permitted analysis of ACP behaviors for Black and Hispanics, each of whom made up 19 percent of the sample. For comparative purposes, the table shows results for Whites, who were 72 percent of the sample. Race and ethnicity questions allowed respondents to identify as Asian American or Native American; those groups made up 5 percent and 4 percent of respondents, respectively. At just over 100 respondents for each group, this is enough to report only participation rates in the ACP, with 28 percent of Asian

Americans and 26 percent of Native Americans reporting that they had enrolled in the program. That is on par with the 26 percent for the entire sample.

For other groups, the table below shows that African Americans are more likely to have enrolled in the ACP than Hispanic and White respondents. Notably, Hispanic respondents said they are more likely to either cancel service or downgrade it in the aftermath of the program's end.

	ALL	USE ACP (% ALL)	WIRELINE	NEW WIRE	CANCEL	DOWN-GRADE	PAY (UN-BUNDLE)
WHITE	72%	25%	76%	20%	14%	36%	$69
BLACK	19%	31%	71%	20%	12%	35%	$62
HISPANIC	19%	25%	72%	14%	17%	45%	$70

With their relatively heavy reliance on the ACP, Blacks in this survey report paying somewhat less for broadband service than others.

c. AGE

Looking at age breakouts, the survey shows that ACP enrollment was strongest for the age-30-to-49 and age-50-to-64 groups. It is striking that younger respondents were more likely than others to use the ACP for a new wireline connection, suggesting (perhaps) that the impetus to stay at home early in the pandemic prompted some to do away with reliance solely on a wireless connection for the internet. In general, older respondents were less likely to use the ACP than all others, as 22 percent of those 65 and older had enrolled in ACP, compared with 28 percent of those under age 65.

	ALL	USE ACP (% ALL)	WIRELINE	NEW WIRE	CANCEL	DOWN-GRADE	PAY (UN-BUNDLE)
18–29	22%	20%	70%	34%	17%	40%	$70
30–49	26%	33%	75%	18%	15%	37%	$70
50–64	23%	30%	74%	20%	13%	37%	$63
65+	28%	22%	80%	13%	9%	30%	$61

Older respondents (age 65 and over) were more likely to use the ACP benefit for wireline service and seemed less inclined than others to cancel or downgrade service upon the benefit's end. Also of note is that older ACP users were more likely to use the benefit to pay for an existing service (as distinct from using ACP for wireline service)—by a margin of 83 percent to 71 percent (for those between the ages of 30 and 64).

d. VETERANS and the DISABLED

A look at how households with veterans and households with a disabled individual used the ACP shows in a striking way the program's importance to the disabled. Nearly one-third (31 percent) of respondents answered "Yes" to the question: "Does any disability or handicap keep you from participating fully in work, school, housework, or other activities?"

	ALL	USE ACP (% ALL)	WIRELINE	NEW WIRE	CANCEL	DOWN-GRADE	PAY (UN-BUNDLE)
VETERAN HH	15%	26%	67%	17%	14%	45%	$70
DISABLED	31%	36%	74%	24%	15%	37%	$64

Disabled respondents are much more likely to have used the ACP than the non-disabled population, by a margin of 36 percent to 22 percent. They are also more likely to have purchased a new wireline subscription with the ACP benefit than all others, 24 percent to 17 percent.

The question identifying veterans' status was: "Have you or has anyone in your house or apartment ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces or National Guard?" Some 15 percent responded "Yes" to this question. Veterans' use of the ACP, and their expected behavior upon its end, does not vary a great deal from the general population.

e. LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

For the survey's lowest-income households—those whose annual income falls below $20,000—the ACP is more important than it is for others in the sample. One-third of all of the lowest-income households use the service subsidy. They are also, relative to those in the sample who are a little better off, nearly twice as likely to have used the subsidy for a new wireline connection and twice as likely to say they would cancel upon the ACP's end.

	ALL	USE ACP (% ALL)	WIRELINE	NEW WIRE	CANCEL	DOWN-GRADE	PAY (UN-BUNDLE)
< $20K	33%	33%	22%	27%	18%	30%	$61
$20K–$50K	67%	23%	18%	15%	9%	40%	$70

METHODOLOGY

The Benton Institute for Broadband & Society engaged SSRS to conduct the 2024 survey of low-income U.S. Households via the SSRS Opinion Panel among low-income U.S. adults ages 18 and older. Data collection was conducted from April 16 to April 29, 2024, among a sample of N=2,525 low-income adults with internet access.

The survey was conducted via web in English (N=2,381) and Spanish (N=144). Data were weighted to represent U.S. adults with internet access who have an annual household income of less than $50,000. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is ±2.5 percentage points.

This report provides information about the sampling procedures and the methods used to collect, process, and weight data for this study.

Sample Design: SSRS Opinion Panel

SSRS Opinion Panel members are recruited randomly based on nationally representative ABS (Address Based Sample) design (including Hawaii and Alaska). ABS respondents are randomly sampled by Marketing Systems Group (MSG) through the U.S. Postal Service's Computerized Delivery Sequence (CDS) file, a regularly updated listing of all known addresses in the United States. For the SSRS Opinion Panel, known business addresses are excluded from the sample frame.

The SSRS Opinion Panel is a multi-mode panel (web and phone). Most panelists take self-administered web surveys; however, the option to take surveys conducted by a live telephone interviewer is available to those who do not use the internet as well as those who use the internet but are reluctant to take surveys online.

Survey Sampling

All samples drawn for this study were SSRS Opinion Panelists who are U.S. adults ages 18 or older and have predicted annual household incomes of less than $50,000. Sample drawn was stratified by age, gender, race and ethnicity, education, Census region, party identification, and preferred survey language to ensure adequate representation of each demographic group.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was developed by the Benton Institute in consultation with the SSRS project team. SSRS reviewed the questionnaire primarily to identify potential problems in the instrument that might increase respondent burden, cause respondents to refuse or terminate the survey, create problems with respondent comprehension, or pose practical challenges for mode-specific administration such as complex skip patterns.

In appreciation for their participation, panelists received post-paid compensation in the form of a $5 electronic gift card, sent via email immediately after completion of the survey. Spanish-speaking panelists and panelists with less than a high school education were offered a larger compensation of $10 to encourage participation.

Median web survey length was approximately nine minutes.

ENDNOTES

1 John B. Horrigan, "State of Digital Equity: Lessons from survey data and focus groups." EveryoneOn, May 2022.

2 John B. Horrigan, "Affordability and the Digital Divide: A national survey of low- and lower-middle income households." EveryoneOn, December 2021.

3 Census table S1901 shows that 34% of U.S. households have annual incomes of $50,000 or less. The Census Bureau estimates that there are 131.4 million households in the United States in 2023. Taking 34% of that figure yields approximately 44.7 million households; 43% of that figure (i.e., the share of subscription vulnerable households in the "under $50,000 income" category) results in the 19 million figure.

4 Krupal Patel, et.al. "Estimated Indirect Cost Savings of Using Telehealth Among Nonelderly Patients with Cancer." *JAMA Network Open,* January 2023.

5 "Does Virtual Care Save Money?" Cigna Healthcare, January 2022.

6 Susan Morse, "Telehealth eliminates time and distance to save money," Healthcare Finance, October 2019.

7 John B. Horrigan, "The Affordable Connectivity Program Creates Benefits that Far Outweigh the Program's Costs." Benton Institute for Broadband & Society, March 2024. The author uses the following research to develop the $1,285 e-commerce benefit figure: Dolfen, Paul, Liran Einav, Peter J. Klenow, Benjamin Klopack, Jonathan D. Levin, Larry Levin, and Wayne Best. "Assessing the Gains from E-Commerce." *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics*, January 2023.

John B. Horrigan is a Benton Senior Fellow. He is a national expert on technology adoption, digital inclusion, and evaluating the outcomes and impacts of programs designed to promote communications technology adoption and use. Horrigan served at the Federal Communications Commission as a member of the leadership team for the development of the National Broadband Plan. Additionally, as an Associate Director for Research at the Pew Research Center, he focused on libraries and their impact on communities, as well as technology adoption patterns and open government data.

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