



Digital Access: An Opportunity to Improve Equity in Central Texas

City of Austin
Community Technology and Telecommunications Commission

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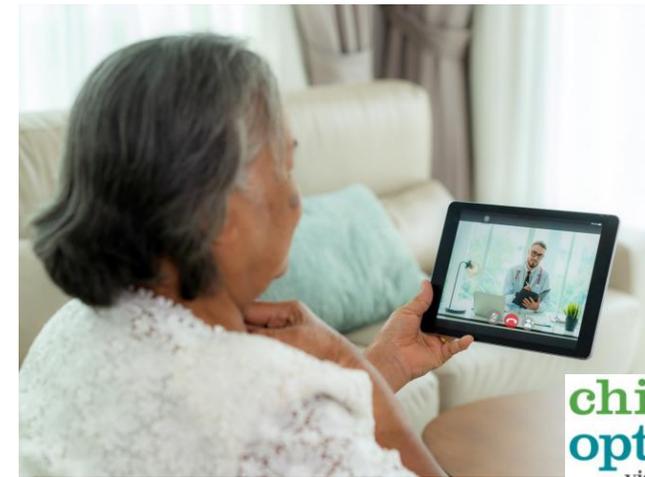
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Digital Inclusion and our Priority Populations

“Digital inclusion is achieved through affordable, robust internet services, digital literacy skills, quality technical support, access to hardware and software, and opportunities for resources and services that augment inclusion efforts.”

Texas State Libraries and Archives Commission



children's optimal health

visible changes for a healthy future

Goals for Today:

- Demonstrate how to access and navigate the website
- Describe our Digital Inclusion project and findings
- Demonstrate our interactive mapping tools (Live demo if time allows)
- Discuss a call to action to advance digital equity





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COH Digital Inclusion Project

- May 2020: disparities in digital tech access impeding student learning
- Good Measure Grant
- 5 County Metro Area
- Food security, Health/Mental health, Social Services
- Scope expanded: health providers, those serving aging populations
- Work across sectors
- GTOPS grants
- Many, many partners involved!

Digital Access: An Opportunity to Improve Equity in Central Texas

“Digital inclusion is achieved through affordable, robust Internet services, digital literacy skills, quality technical support, access to hardware and software, and opportunities for resources and services that augment inclusion efforts.” – TSLAC

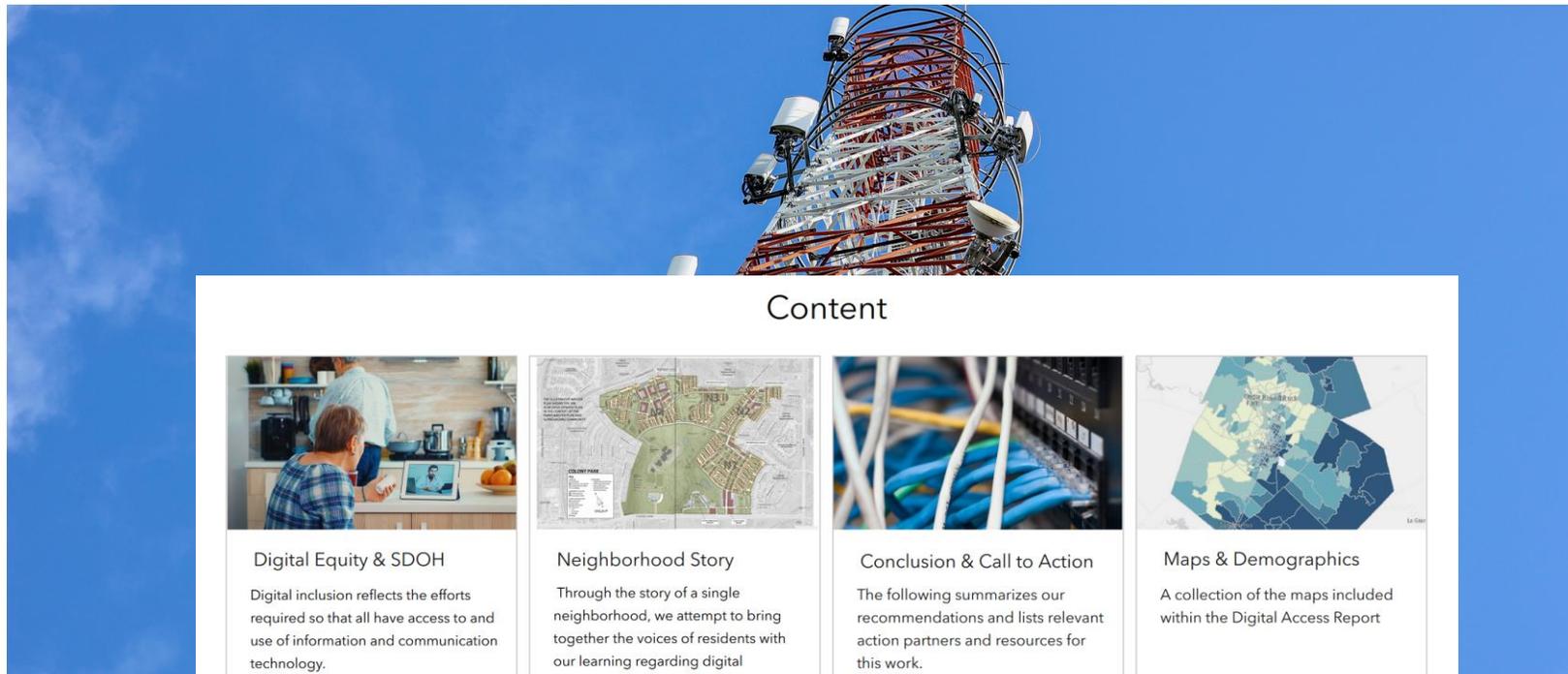
Click on the image below to access our [digital equity project](#):



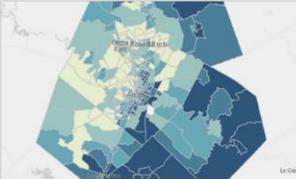
- Overview & User Guide
- Methodology
- User Guide

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"Digital inclusion is achieved through affordable, robust Internet services, digital literacy skills, quality technical support, access to hardware and software, and opportunities for resources and services that augment inclusion efforts." - TSLAC



Content

 <p>Digital Equity & SDOH</p> <p>Digital inclusion reflects the efforts required so that all have access to and use of information and communication technology.</p>	 <p>Neighborhood Story</p> <p>Through the story of a single neighborhood, we attempt to bring together the voices of residents with our learning regarding digital inclusion.</p>	 <p>Conclusion & Call to Action</p> <p>The following summarizes our recommendations and lists relevant action partners and resources for this work.</p>	 <p>Maps & Demographics</p> <p>A collection of the maps included within the Digital Access Report</p>
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Equity and Social Determinants of Health

Digital Inclusion refers to the activities necessary to ensure that all communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of information and communication technologies. This includes 5 elements:

- 1) affordable, robust broadband internet service
- 2) internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user
- 3) access to digital literacy training
- 4) quality technical support
- 5) applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration

- Equity, Social Determinants, & Digital Inclusion
- Priority Populations & Social Influencers of Health
- COH Digital Inclusion Survey
- Education & Workforce
- Health Care
- Older Adults & Persons with Disabilities
- Rural Communities
- Conclusion

“

But then again, in some of these areas in our county, you might have a hotspot but you still don't have a signal. So it's kind of like you have a carrot but it's behind the glass plate and you can't eat it so it doesn't do much.

- Communities in Schools Staff

”

reduce and use technology.

es have the r society, cultural al services. Source:

1 technologies to h cognitive and gital Literacy Task

olicies that meet a entities work e, including

affordable broadband, devices, and skills. source. National Digital Inclusion Alliance



Overview to the Neighborhood Story

In the spring of 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold nationally, it became apparent that a critical need across health, mental health, social service, education and workforce sectors in responding to and recovering from the pandemic has been the glaring inequity in access to broadband connectivity, appropriate devices and the skills to use them to ensure that students can continue to learn, health can be provided, and adults can continue to work.

The efforts of Children's Optimal Health to document and reflect on issues of digital inclusion under the Good Measure grant extended to the 5 county Austin Metropolitan Statistical Area. This geography encompasses urban core, urban, suburban, exurban and rural communities. Digital access as well as health disparity and social equity issues are fundamentally the story of local neighborhoods. It is in these smaller areas that access to housing, jobs, health care, education, transportation, recreation, healthy food, and a safe and supportive environment combine to influence if not define the life trajectories of individuals, and collectively, the community.

It is through the story of a single neighborhood that we attempt to bring together the voices of residents with our learning regarding digital inclusion as an essential component that must be included in efforts to address the social determinants of health, target health disparities and work to achieve equity in our community. The story of Austin's Colony Park neighborhood reflects the history and impact of discriminatory policies as well as the efforts of residents, policy makers and service providers to identify and address inequities. It is a story of recent achievement and hope.



Photo Source: [City of Austin Colony Park Promo Video](#)

Interacting With Maps

Interactive maps allow users to explore geographic data by zooming in and out, panning around, identifying specific features, and more.

- The maps contain layers which can be turned on and off. If more than one layer is activated, the layer that is higher up on the list will hide any layers beneath it; however, layers can be made more transparent so that features underneath the layer are visible.
- By clicking on a Census Tract, a pop-up box is activated that provides information about that Tract.
- The search button can be used to search for a particular location.
- To pan around, left-click and hold the mouse button and drag the map.

The screenshot shows the map interface with several annotations:

- Zoom in and out:** Points to the zoom controls (+, -, and Home icons).
- Return to default map view:** Points to the Home icon.
- Zoom to this Census Tract:** Points to the search icon in the map toolbar.
- Search for a specific street address only:** Points to the search input field.
- Expand layer categories:** Points to the search icon in the layer list.
- Turn layers on and off:** Points to the eye icons in the layer list.
- Left-click any Census Tract to activate the pop-up information box:** Points to a census tract on the map.
- Close pop-up box:** Points to the close (X) button in the pop-up box.

The pop-up box for **Census Tract 208.07, Williamson County, Texas** displays the following information:

- 10.4% of people here are under the age of 5, about 1,153 people.
- This percentage has a margin of error of 2.4% and a data reliability score of: **Reliable**.
- Data collected and derived from

The layer list on the right includes:

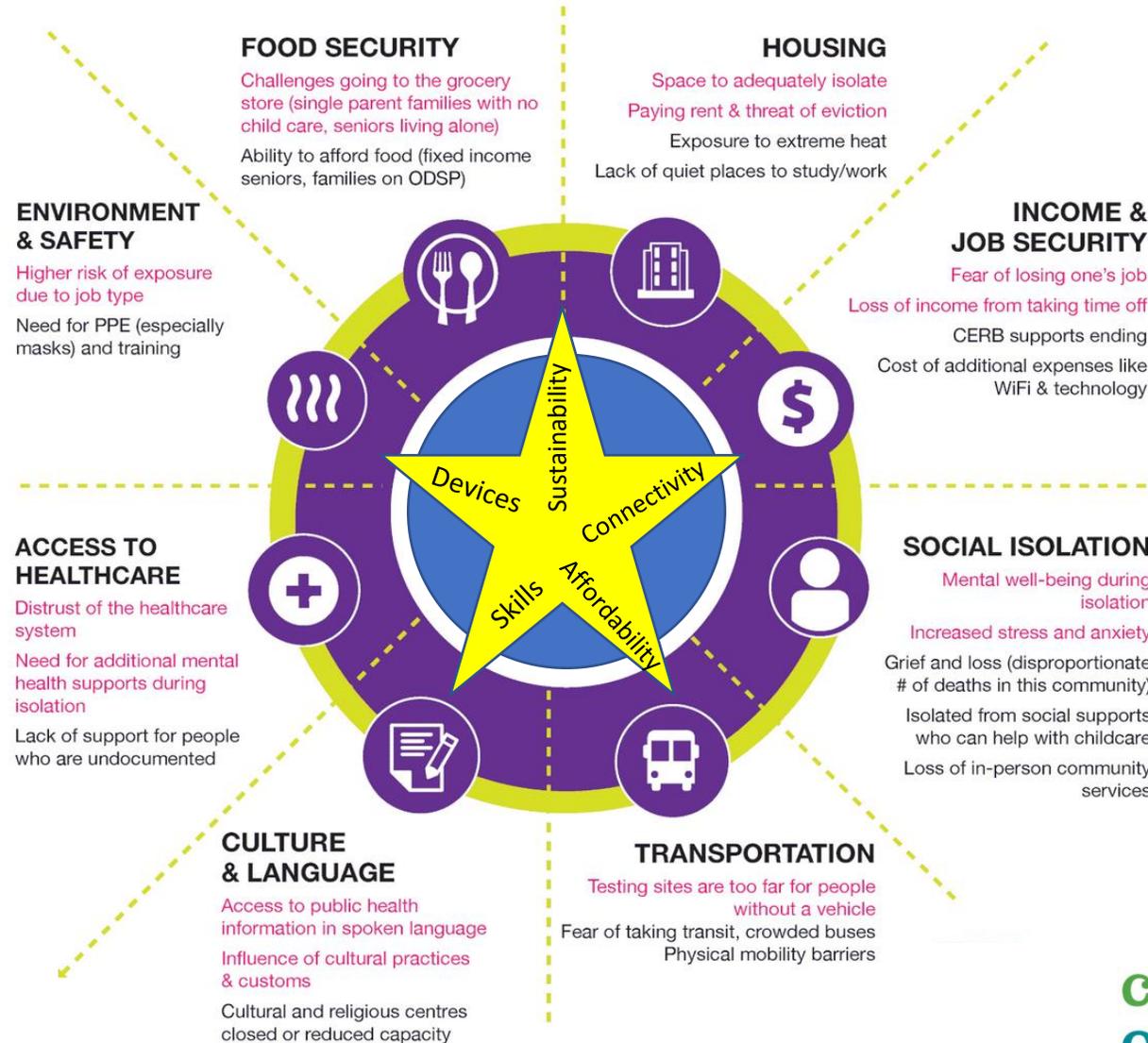
- Age Group
- ACS 2019 B01001 Age Group - Age Under 5 Years
- ACS 2019 B01001 Age Group - Age Between 5 - 9 Years
- ACS 2019 B01001 Age Group - Age Between 10 - 14 Years
- ACS 2019 B01001 Age Group - Age Between 15 - 19 Years
- ACS 2019 B01001 Age Group - Age Between 20 - 24 Years
- ACS 2019 B01001 Age Group - Age Between 25 - 54 Years
- ACS 2019 B01001 Age Group - Age Between 55 - 64 Years
- ACS 2019 B01001 Age Group - Age Over 65 Years
- Income and Poverty
- Race/Ethnicity

COVID-19, SDOH, Digital Access, and Equity

COVID-19 & SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Not everyone has been affected equally by the pandemic. The social determinants of health affect not only who gets sick (pink) but everyone in the community during this unprecedented time.

The pandemic is exacerbating the impact of these inequities, particularly for communities who are already under-resourced and experiencing barriers.



Adapted from
Toronto, Canada



**children's
optimal health**
visible changes for a healthy future

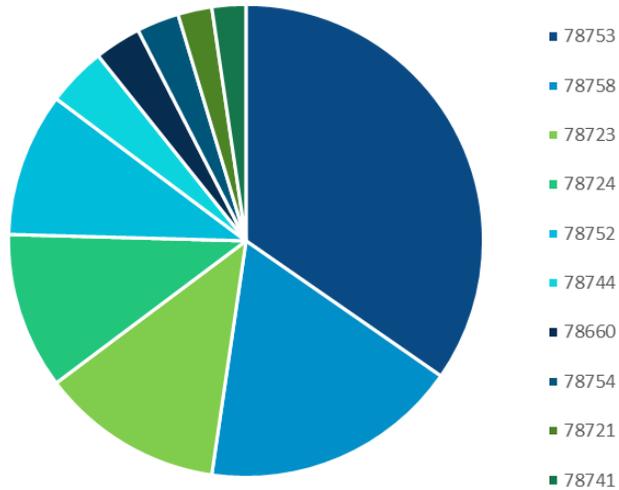
What we are learning from Priority Populations: DIVERSITY

Children's Optimal Health Survey SY 2020-21

What is your ZIP code?

By Count, N=353

Note: ZIPs with fewer than 6 were suppressed



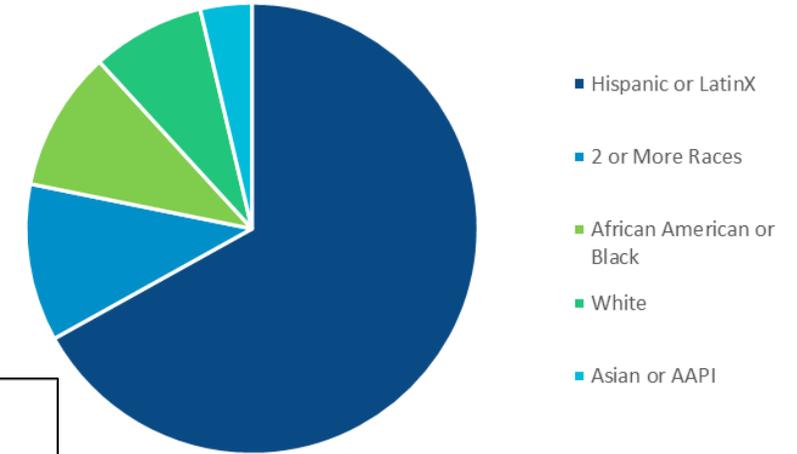
What is your ZIP Code?

What is your race or origin?

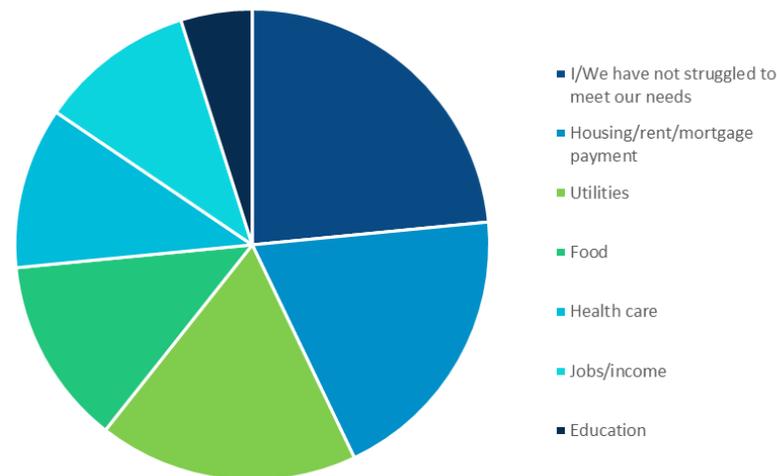
Children's Optimal Health Survey SY 2020-21

What is your race or origin?

By Count, N=411



Children's Optimal Health Survey SY 2020-21
In SY 2020-21, has your household struggled to meet these basic needs?
By Count, N=226

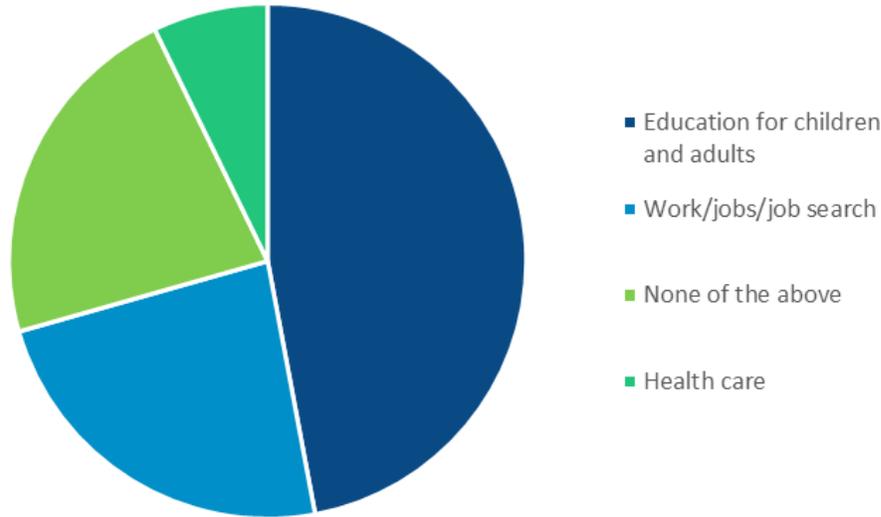


Has your household struggled to meet basic needs in SY 2020-21?

What we are learning from Priority Populations: ACCESS

Has a lack of good internet access or devices in your home caused problems obtaining any of the following?

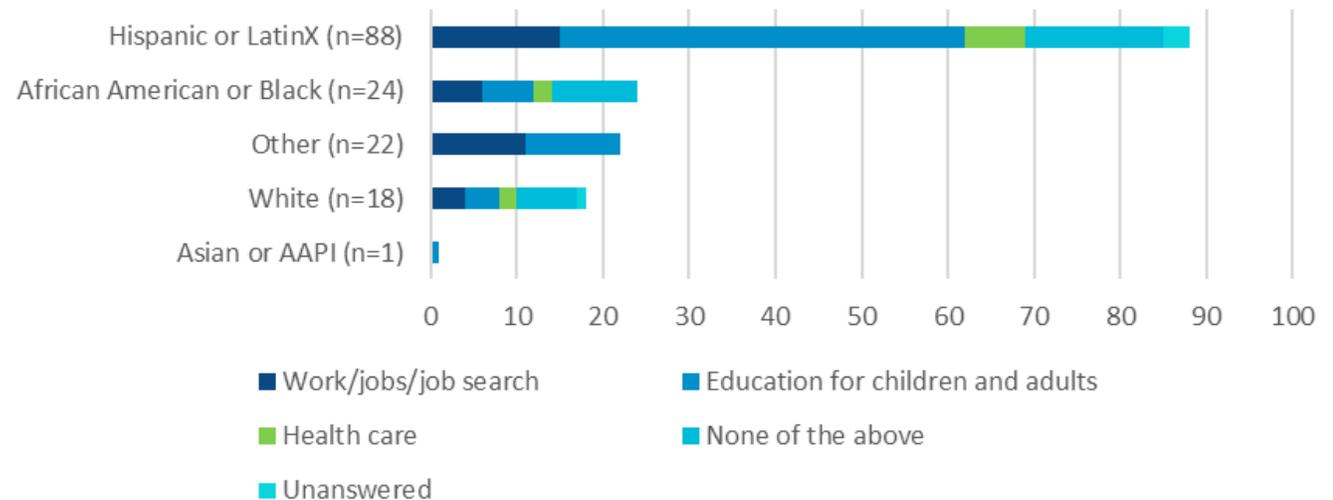
Children's Optimal Health Survey SY 2020-21
 Has a lack of good internet access or devices in your home caused problems obtaining any of the following?
 By Count, N=153



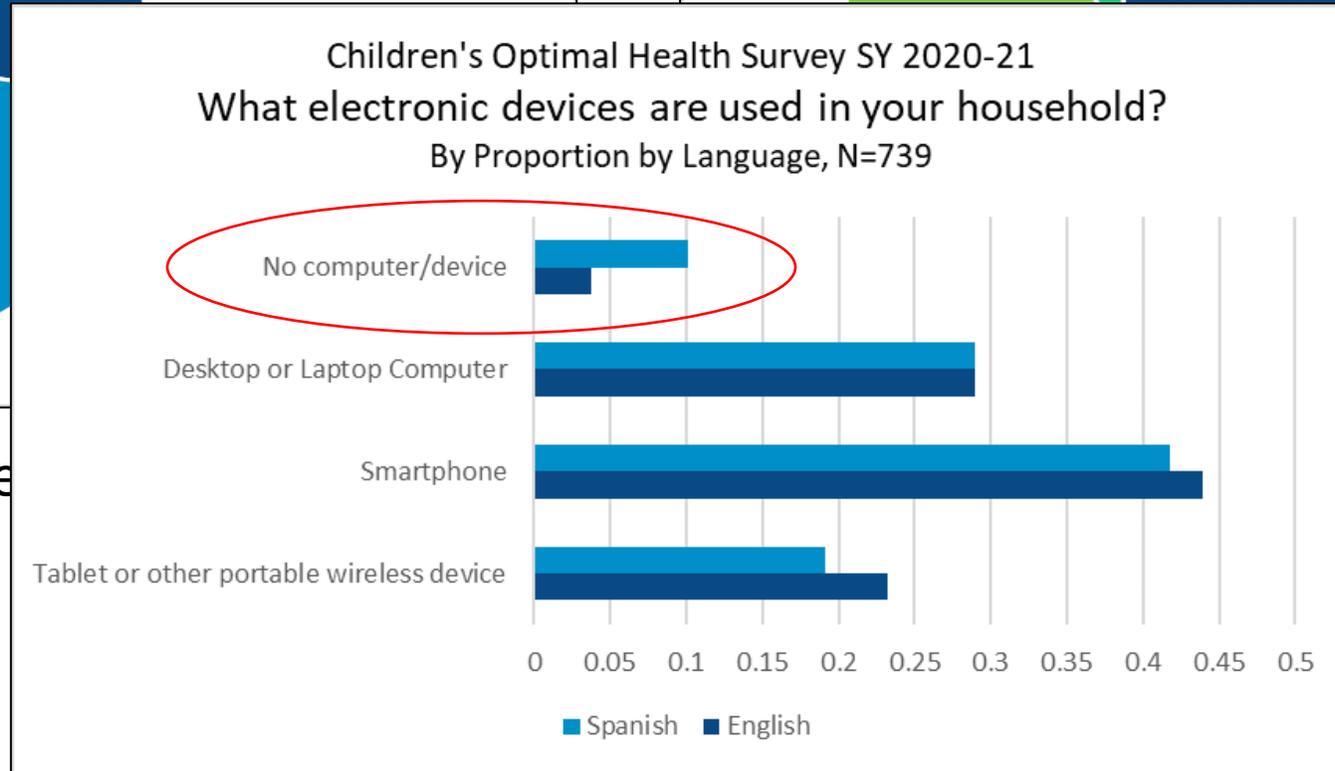
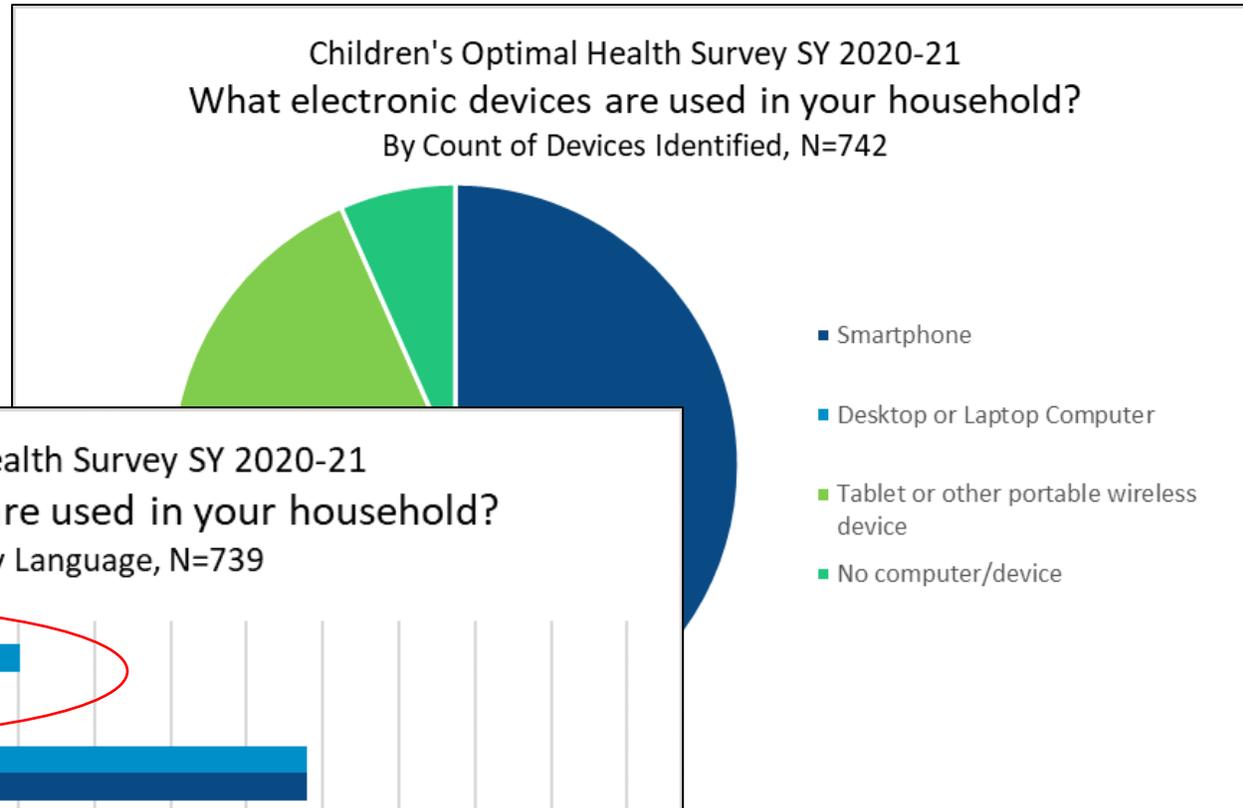
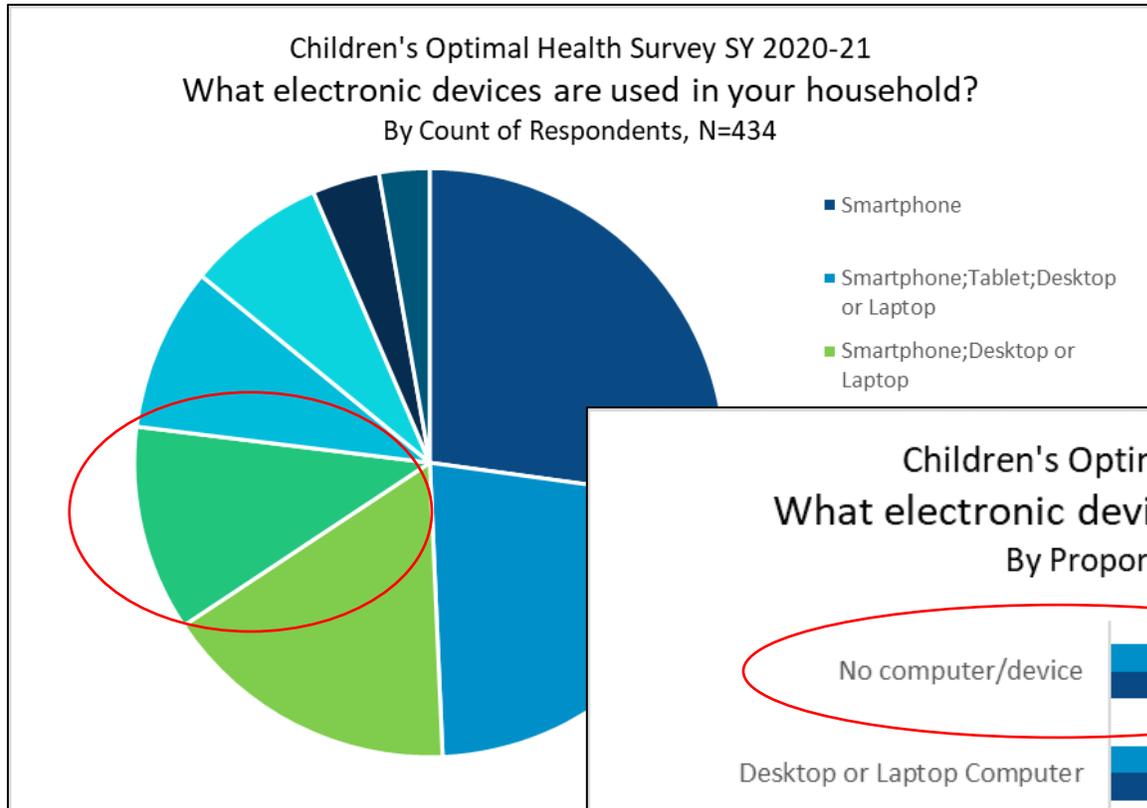
Same question, analyzed by Race/Ethnicity

Children's Optimal Health Survey SY 2020-21
 Has a lack of good internet access or devices in your home caused problems obtaining any of the following in SY 2020-21?

By Count of Race/Ethnic Group, N=153
 *"Other" includes those who identified as "Other" and "



What we are learning from Priority Populations: DEVICES

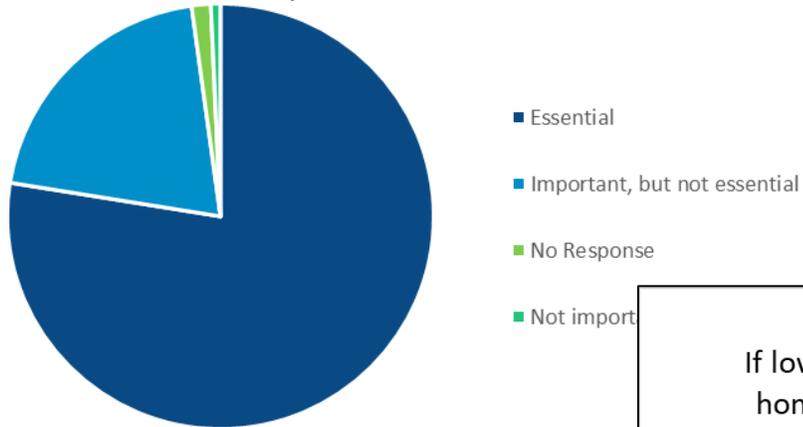


Devices used in household, by Count of Respondents

Devices used in household, by Count of

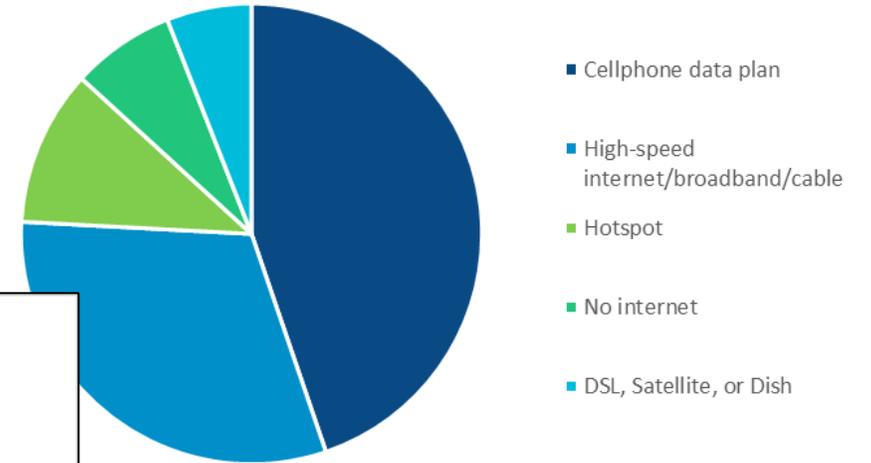
What we are learning from Priority Populations: CONNECTIVITY

Children's Optimal Health Survey SY 2020-21
 How important is high-speed internet access at home for your household?
 By Count, N=138

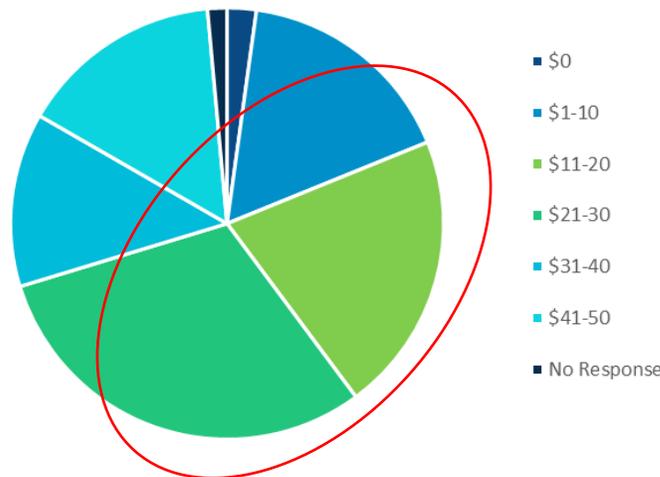


How important is high-speed internet access at home?

Children's Optimal Health Survey SY 2020-21
 How do you access the internet in your home?
 By Count of Responses, N=621



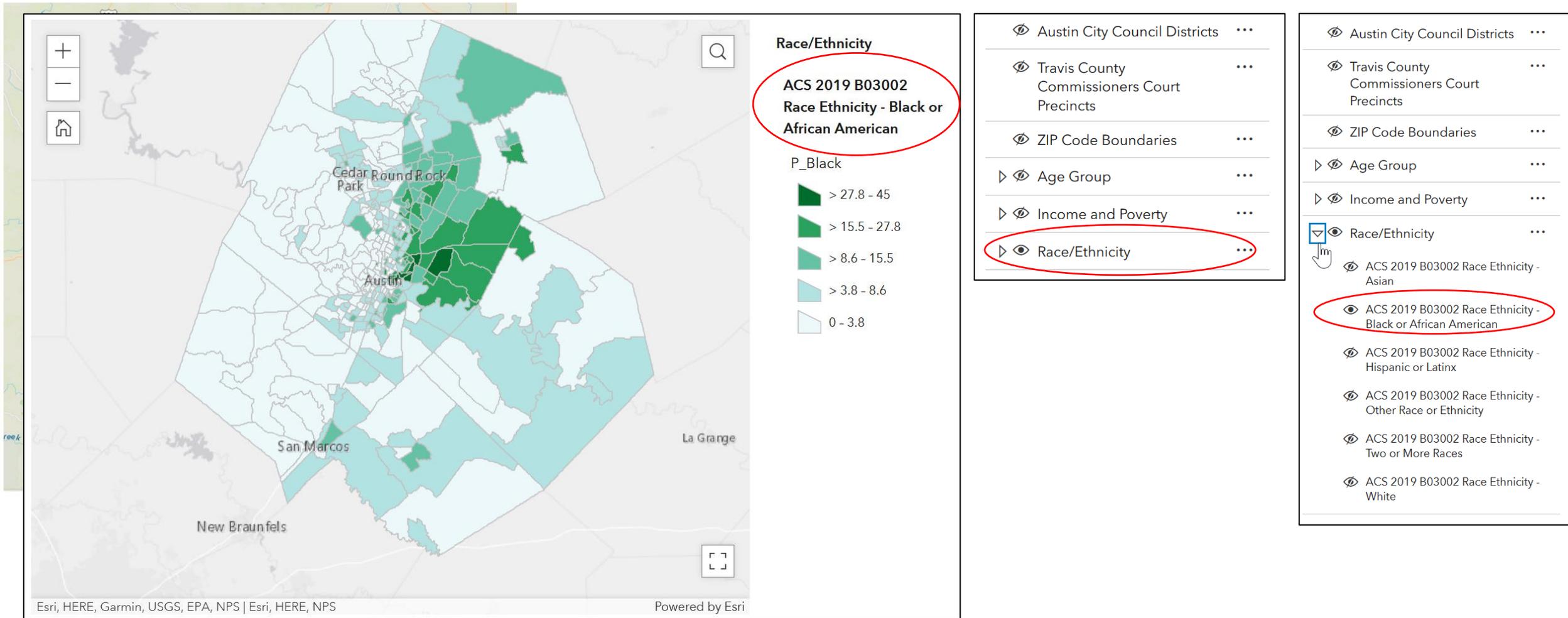
Children's Optimal Health Survey SY 2020-21
 If low-cost high-speed internet were available at home, realistically what is the most per month you could afford to pay?
 By Count, N=138



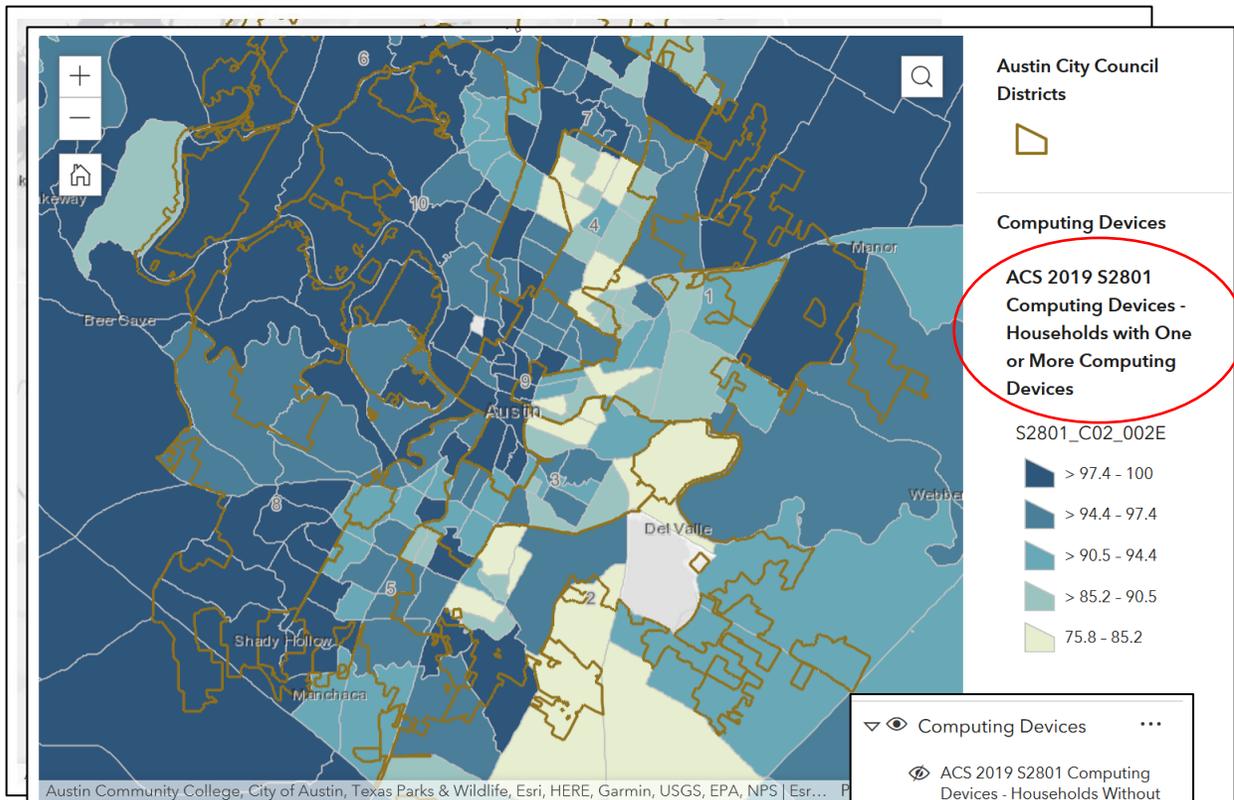
If low-cost high-speed internet were available at home, realistically what is the most per month you could afford to pay?

How do you access the internet at home?

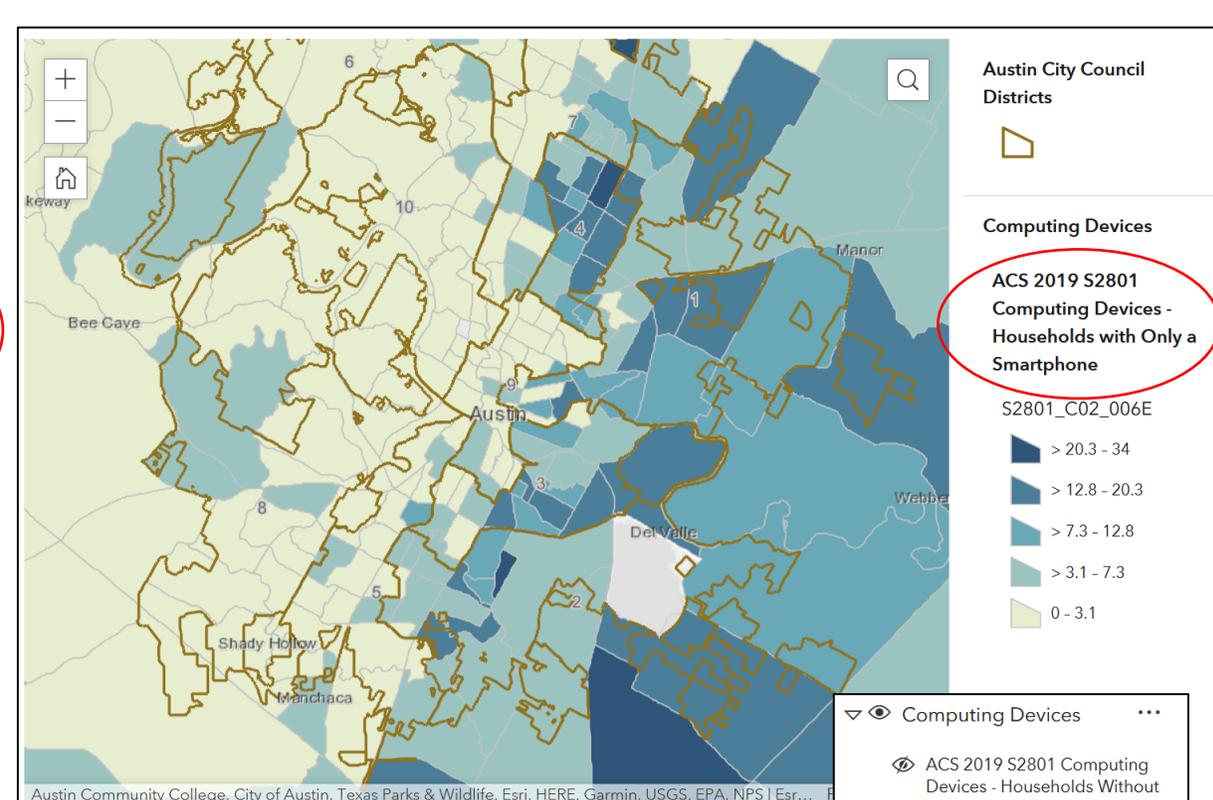
Using Interactive Maps: Overview



Using Interactive Maps: Computing Devices by Council District



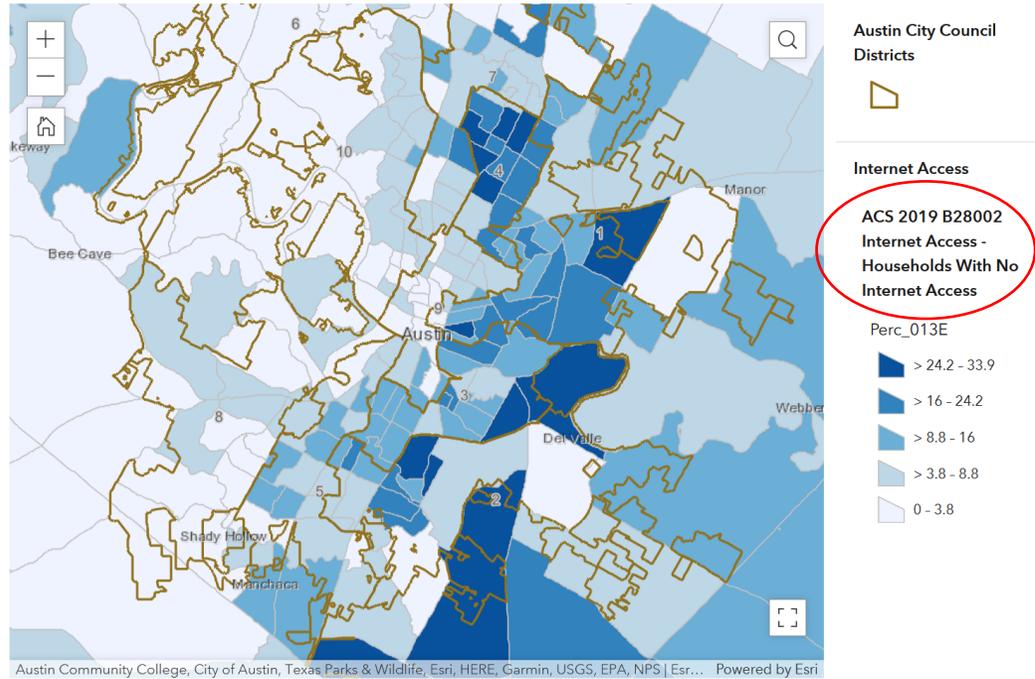
Households with one or more computing devices



Households with ONLY a smartphone

Using Interactive Maps: Internet Access by Council District

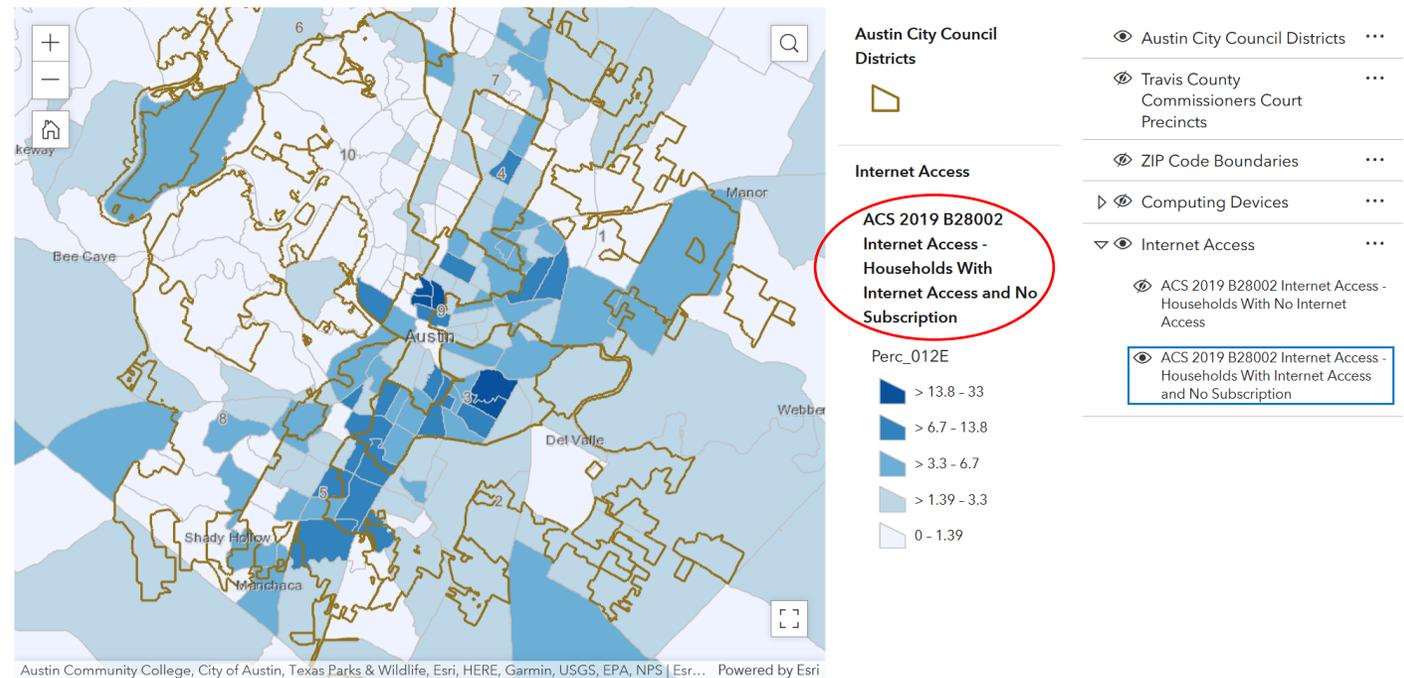
American Community Survey (ACS) Internet Access Data - Austin MSA Census Tracts



Households with Internet access and NO SUBSCRIPTION

Households with NO INTERNET ACCESS

American Community Survey (ACS) Internet Access Data - Austin MSA Census Tracts



Conclusions

Digital equity is emerging as a *'super-determinant' of health*

- Digital equity for **education** is essential for our priority populations
 - Impact of failure to ensure digital inclusion is multigenerational, with economic and health effects
- Digital access for **health** is essential for our priority populations
 - Health and social service providers need to screen for devices, internet access, skills, affordability
- Smartphones are ubiquitous even among many within our priority populations
- Who “owns” responsibility for digital inclusion?
 - Cross-sector issue
 - High risk of a return to silo-ing post pandemic
- Policies to enhance digital equity are being developed now
- Funding opportunities for digital access are now, equity efforts need to be integrated



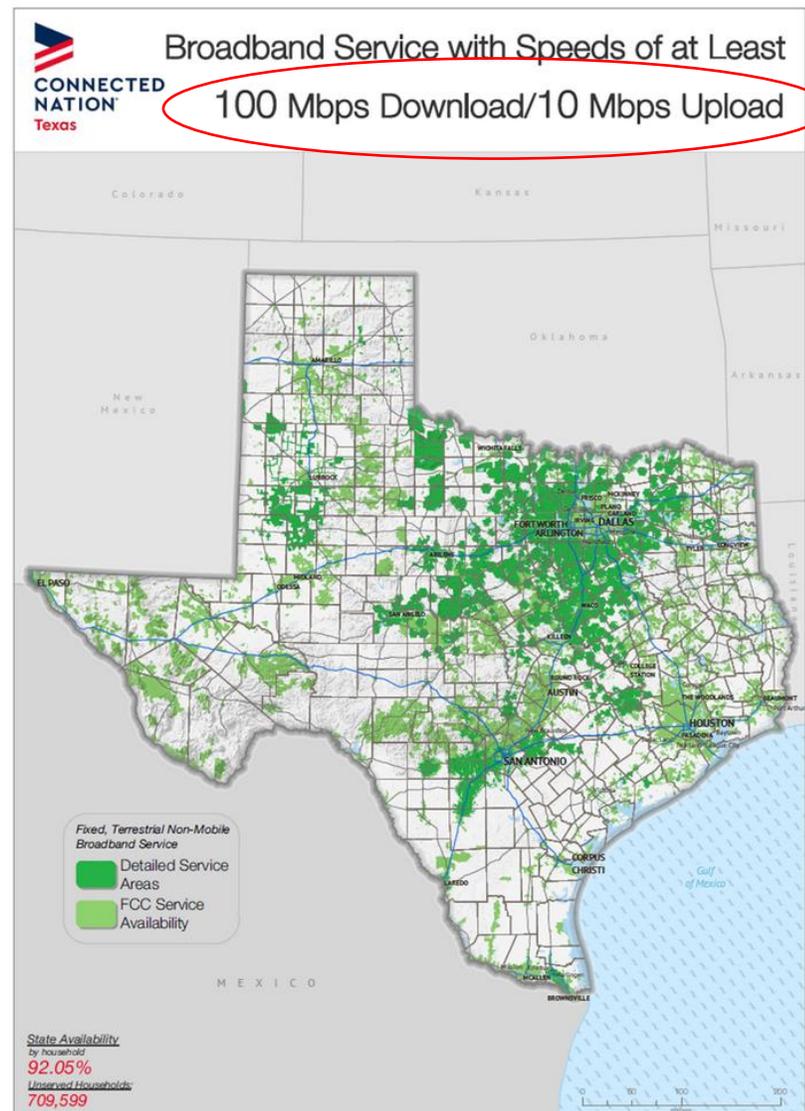
Texas Statewide Recommendations

Planning for Digital Inclusion in Texas

UT School of Law Texas Black Caucus Foundation and Civil Rights Clinic

All Texans Need

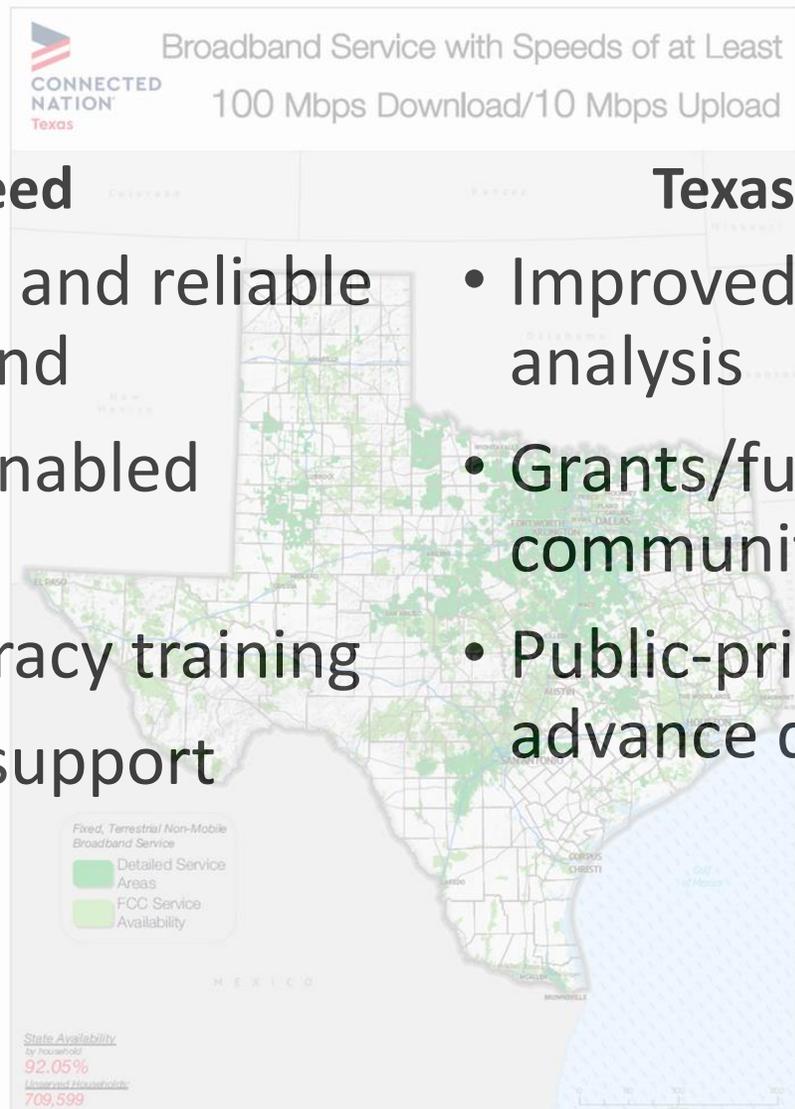
- Access to affordable and reliable *high-speed* broadband
- Access to internet-enabled devices
- Access to digital literacy training
- Access to technical support



Texas Statewide Recommendations

Planning for Digital Inclusion in Texas

UT School of Law Texas Black Caucus Foundation and Civil Rights Clinic



All Texans Need

- Access to affordable and reliable *high-speed* broadband
- Access to internet-enabled devices
- Access to digital literacy training
- Access to technical support

Texas Communities Need

- Improved data collection and analysis
- Grants/funding to local communities
- Public-private partnerships to advance digital inclusion

Local Call to Action

- Austin should be a national leader for digital inclusion and equity.
- Entities already working on Diversity/Equity/Inclusion should incorporate digital equity within that scope.
- Entities serving people adversely affected by SDOH should screen and monitor client needs for digital access.
- To be competitive for investment, gather *local* data on broadband access, reliability, speed testing.



- Develop the capacity to assess local needs by engaging members of priority populations.
- Local governments and anchor institutions (school districts, health and social service systems, libraries) should collaborate across sectors and work with and support the TX Broadband Development Office.
- Trusted digital navigators with language and cultural competence are essential support for those with less access. They need funding.
- Technology will evolve. Achieving digital equity is an on-going process.
- Develop metrics, track, and report progress. Document challenges.

Thank You

Susan Millea and Dan Brown

www.cohtx.org



Mapping Demo (if time allows)
Q/A and Discussion

The screenshot shows a web application interface with a navigation bar at the top containing dropdown menus for 'Overview & User Guide', 'Digital Equity & SDOH', 'Neighborhood Story', 'Conclusion, Recommendations, & Call to Action', and 'Maps & Demographics'. Below the navigation bar is a text block: 'The following is a list of organizations we have identified as working to support digital access. We apologize for any omissions. We present this list in the hope that it can encourage further partnerships to promote digital equity.'

The main content area features a table titled 'Action Partners' with a search bar and a list of organizations. The table has two columns: 'Organization' and 'Website'.

Organization	Website
Advocacy Outreach	https://www.advocacyoutreach.org/
African American Youth Harvest Foundation	https://aayhf.org/
American YouthWorks	https://americanyouthworks.org/
Any Baby Can	https://anybabycan.org/
Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area	https://www.capcog.org/divisions/area-agency-on-aging/
Aunt Bertha (FindHelp)	https://www.findhelp.org/
Austin Area Urban League	https://aaul.org/
Austin Asian Community Health Initiative	https://aachi.org/