REGIONAL DIGITAL INCLUSION PLAN

2025

EASTERN CAROLINA COUNCIL

Executive Summary

The Eastern Carolina Council (ECC) has developed the region's first comprehensive Digital Inclusion Plan to address long-standing digital gaps affecting residents, businesses, and essential services in our nine-county region: Carteret, Craven, Duplin, Greene, Jones, Lenoir, Onslow, Pamlico, and Wayne.

Today, reliable internet access, modern devices, and digital skills are fundamental to education, workforce participation, healthcare access, public safety, and economic mobility. Yet many residents, especially older adults, low-income households, rural communities, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and those facing language barriers, continue to encounter persistent barriers to digital participation.

Regional data, surveys, and listening sessions conducted across all nine counties identified five consistent barriers:

- Infrastructure Gaps: Rural areas remain unserved or underserved by high-speed, reliable broadband.
- Affordability: Many households cannot sustain monthly service without subsidy support.
- Device Access: Thousands of households lack a working computer or adequate device for school, work, or telehealth.
- Digital Skills: Seniors, returning citizens, and residents with limited education often struggle to navigate basic online tools, government services, or internet safety.
- Cybersecurity Concerns: Fear of scams, fraud, and data breaches reduces trust in online systems and limits digital adoption.

These gaps restrict economic competitiveness, hinder workforce development, and limit residents' ability to participate fully in an increasingly digital society.

The ECC Digital Inclusion Plan was built through nine county-level listening sessions, reaching seniors, veterans, returning citizens, low-income families, minority communities, English-language learners, and rural households. Their lived experiences directly shaped the plan's goals, strategies, and performance metrics.

The plan establishes a strategic, action-oriented roadmap to ensure that every resident and business in Eastern Carolina can participate fully in the digital economy. Implementation will strengthen local government capacity, improve access to essential services, and expand economic opportunity by enabling:

- A more skilled and digitally capable workforce
- Greater support for local employers and industry
- Improved access to education, healthcare, and government services
- Stronger economic development competitiveness

Acknowledgments

The Eastern Carolina Council (ECC) Digital Inclusion Plan is the result of a deeply collaborative, community-driven effort, led by Dr. Stella Jackman-Ryan, Digital Inclusion Consultant for ECC, in partnership with ECC's executive leadership. The Eastern Carolina Council extends its sincere gratitude to the many individuals and organizations whose time, expertise, and lived experience made this work possible.

ECC thanks all partner organizations and local collaborators who supported the planning and execution of the listening sessions. Their assistance with outreach, coordination, and community engagement was critical to ensuring broad participation and representation from covered populations throughout the region.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the participants in the listening sessions across all counties, who generously shared their experiences, challenges, and aspirations related to broadband access, devices, digital skills, and online opportunities. Their voices are the foundation of this plan and central to its focus on equity, inclusion, and community-centered strategies.

We are especially grateful to the Steering Committee, whose guidance, insight, and commitment shaped the vision, priorities, and direction of this plan from its earliest stages. Their engagement and feedback ensured that the plan reflects both regional needs and local realities.

We wish to acknowledge David Bone, former Executive Director of ECC, for his early leadership and support of digital inclusion efforts, and David Rosado, current Executive Director of ECC, for his continued commitment to advancing digital equity across Eastern North Carolina. Their leadership has been instrumental in sustaining ECC's vision for inclusive regional development.

Special recognition is also extended to Cynthia Livingston and Adama Washington for their contributions, collaboration, and support throughout the planning process.

We are grateful to the PEER Team at the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, led by Erin Huggins, for their expertise, partnership, and technical support. ECC also acknowledges the contributions of the Institute for Emerging Issues (IEI), especially Jess Epsten and Kylie Foley, whose insights and collaboration strengthened the planning process and analysis.

The shared commitment of these individuals along with all other contributors to digital inclusion ensures that this document is not only a strategic roadmap, but a reflection of the communities it is designed to serve.

Digital Opportunities for Eastern Carolina Council of Government

Introduction to the ECC Region

The Eastern Carolina region encompasses over 5,700 square miles and is home to more than 656,000 residents. The area includes a blend of coastal and inland communities, ranging from urban centers to rural towns. Economically, the region is supported by various sectors, including military, agribusiness, manufacturing, healthcare, education, and tourism. However, it also faces significant challenges, including aging infrastructure, workforce development barriers, environmental concerns, and ongoing disparities in broadband availability and digital skills.

The Eastern Carolina Council of Governments (ECC) is the designated regional planning and development organization for nine counties: Carteret, Craven, Duplin, Greene, Jones, Lenoir, Onslow, Pamlico, and Wayne. For over five decades, ECC has collaborated with local governments and partners to support regional economic development, infrastructure coordination, and the delivery of human services.

In response to both longstanding and newly emerging digital access issues, ECC initiated a Regional Digital Inclusion Plan aimed at addressing the region's digital divide. The plan focuses on improving broadband access, enhancing digital literacy, and fostering inclusive technology use. Developed in collaboration with North Carolina State University's Institute for Emerging Issues and the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, with support from the North Carolina Department of Information Technology and the Camber Foundation, the plan emphasizes strategies that reflect local needs and priorities.

This effort builds on ECC's previous work in promoting digital engagement, particularly among older adults. In 2023, ECC implemented a Digital Technology Program that introduced tools such as the Meeting Owl and Obie for seniors in regional senior centers. These tools supported virtual participation and interactive activities, helping to reduce social isolation and support healthy aging.

Digital inclusion is one part of a broader network of programs in the region. In the 2023–2024 fiscal year, ECC facilitated the distribution of over $4.2 million in Home and Community Care Block Grants, providing a range of services including more than 164,000 home-delivered meals, nearly 100,000 congregate meals, and over 70,000 in-home service units. Additionally, ECC has contributed to disaster mitigation efforts, transportation planning, and economic development initiatives, including projects in aquaculture and aviation.

Looking ahead, the Digital Inclusion Plan represents a regional commitment to reducing digital inequities and supporting equitable access to technology. It reflects an understanding that digital access is a key factor in education, economic mobility, and community resilience and that ensuring all residents, regardless of age, geography, or income, have the tools to succeed is essential to long-term regional vitality.

Mission and Vision

Vision

The residents and businesses of the Eastern Carolina region will have equitable access to reliable, attainable, and secure digital tools, skills, and resources, enabling them to fully participate in the economy and society. Our region will thrive as digital inclusion fosters upward economic mobility, safe and informed technology use, and empowered, resilient communities in the ever-changing digital world.

Mission

To collaborate with community members, local governments, organizations, and stakeholders to provide attainable and accessible high-speed internet, digital devices, and quality technical support. We aim to equip individuals with the necessary skills to safely navigate the digital landscape, drive economic development, and support the unique needs of each community in the Eastern Carolina region. Through partnerships and evolving systems, we will overcome digital inclusion barriers and ensure all can access and benefit from the digital world.

Key Definitions

American Communities Survey

The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing survey that provides vital information on a yearly basis about our nation and its people, including internet data.

Broadband

A type of "always on" internet connection, in contrast to dial-up. In 2015, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) established the minimum speed for broadband at 25 download/3 upload Mbps or megabits per second. However, on July 12, 2022, the FCC raised the limits to 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload. What is the difference between broadband and Wi-Fi? Wi-Fi is not a type of internet; it is a technology that enables internet access. Wi-Fi is the radio signal that is sent from a router to wireless devices (laptops, tablets, smartphones, etc.). The cable that is plugged into a router is called a broadband cable. Broadband is not exclusive to Wi-Fi; it can also include DSL (a direct connection via copper phone lines) and fiber (a direct connection using ultra-thin glass strands that carry light instead of electricity).

Broadband Access

Having the wires, Wi-Fi, and connectivity available.

Broadband Adoption

Broadband adoption has traditionally been defined as the number of residential subscribers to high-speed internet access. But for those in the field working to increase the digital capacity of communities, broadband adoption is daily access to the internet:

- At speeds, quality and capacity necessary to accomplish everyday tasks,
- With the digital skills required to participate online, and
- On a personal device and secure, convenient network.

Community Anchor Institution

Community Anchor Institutions (CAls) refers to a school, library, health clinic, health center, hospital or other medical provider, public safety entity, institution of higher education, public housing organization (including any public housing agency, HUD-assisted housing organization, or tribal housing organization), or community support organization that facilitates greater use of broadband service by covered populations.

Covered Populations

Covered populations refer to groups of individuals who have historically faced greater barriers to digital access and participation.

Digital Divide

The digital divide refers to the gap between those who have affordable access, the necessary skills, and support to engage effectively online and those who do not. As technology constantly evolves, the digital divide prevents equal participation and opportunity in all parts of life, disproportionately affecting people of color, Indigenous peoples, households with low incomes, people with disabilities, people in rural areas, and older adults.

Digital Equity

Digital Equity is a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy. Digital Equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.

It is also referred to as digital opportunity.

Digital Inclusion

Digital Inclusion refers to the activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communication

Technologies (ICTs). This includes five 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; and 5) applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration. Digital Inclusion must evolve as technology continues to advance. Digital Inclusion requires intentional strategies and investments to reduce and eliminate historical, institutional, and structural barriers to access and use technology.

Digital Inclusion Ecosystem

A Digital Inclusion Ecosystem is a combination of programs and policies that meet a geographic community's unique and diverse needs. Coordinating entities work together in an ecosystem to address all aspects of the digital divide, including affordable broadband, devices, and skills.

Indicators of a strong Digital Inclusion Ecosystem:

- Existence of programs and policies addressing all aspects of the digital divide:
    - Affordable and subsidized broadband service options that meet the community's needs
    - Affordable and subsidized device ownership programs that meet the community's needs
    - Multilingual digital literacy and digital skill training that meet the community's needs
    - Hardware and software technical support
    - Digital navigation services to guide residents to the above services
- Collaboration: Entities providing local digital inclusion services, policymakers, advocates, social service providers, and community leaders co-create solutions in partnership with the community.

Digital Literacy

The National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) recommends the American Library Association's definition of Digital Literacy via their Digital Literacy Task Force:

Digital Literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills.

A person with digital literacy skills:

- Possesses the variety of skills – technical and cognitive – required to find, understand, evaluate, create, and communicate digital information in a wide variety of formats;
- Can use diverse technologies appropriately and effectively to retrieve information, interpret results, and judge the quality of that information;

- Understands the relationship between technology, life-long learning, personal privacy, and stewardship of information;
- Uses these skills and the appropriate technology to communicate and collaborate with peers, colleagues, family, and on occasion, the general public and
- Uses these skills to actively participate in civic society and contribute to a vibrant, informed, and engaged community.

Note: *Using "Digital Literacy" or "Digital Skills" in Community Work*

While the term "digital literacy" is used frequently in trade publications, research and policy, we recommend using terms like "digital skills" or "beginner computer training" while conducting community work. The words "literacy" and "illiteracy" can be perceived negatively by communities that need digital inclusion the most. Using asset-based language reflects the opportunity for growth and decolonizes language around education.

Digital Navigators

Digital navigators are trusted guides who provide ongoing, individualized support to help community members access affordable and appropriate connectivity, devices, and digital skills.

Download/Upload Speeds

Mbps, or megabits per second, is the unit of measurement for internet bandwidth. Bandwidth is the maximum speed at which data can be downloaded and uploaded and is rarely at 100% since it reflects the maximum speeds and not the average speeds. Speeds can fluctuate based on what users are downloading or uploading, the number of devices connected to the network, and other factors. The FCC's Household Broadband Guide recommends a minimum of 100 Mbps for download and 20 Mbps upload.

NTIA

National Telecommunications and Information Administration, an agency of the United States Department of Commerce, that awards and defines policies relating to the Digital Equity Act and Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) funding.

Eastern Carolina Council Planning Process

The development of this Regional Digital Inclusion Plan followed a structured, community-informed planning process led by ECC that integrated input from across all counties. The process recognized the distinct needs, priorities, and resources of each county while also identifying shared regional goals.

Kick-off Events

The initiative formally began with two regional kick-off events in August 2024 that included representatives from local governments, libraries, school systems, community organizations, workforce agencies, and other key partners. The first kick-off event took place on August 20, 2024, at Craven Community College, engaging stakeholders from Carteret, Craven, Jones, Onslow, and Pamlico counties. The second kick-off event took place on August 22, 2024, in the Town of La Grange and included stakeholders from Duplin, Greene, Lenoir, and Wayne counties.

Each event followed a structured agenda that introduced the objectives of the digital inclusion plan, presented data on broadband access and digital equity across the region, and engaged attendees in discussion on the core topics of internet affordability and availability, access to digital devices, digital skills, and training needs as it relates to their counties. Ideas for an overarching vision and mission for digital inclusion in Eastern North Carolina were explored. These sessions helped identify early priorities and inform the next phase of engagement— community partnership.

Following the kick-off events, ECC distributed draft mission and vision statements to participants for feedback via Google Forms and follow-up emails. The team also began initiating contact with key stakeholders, including community organizations, faith-based organizations, libraries, and other county-level services, to foster partnerships for county-specific listening sessions.

Listening Sessions

From September 2024 to September 2025, ECC hosted listening sessions in each of the nine counties, with attendance ranging from 9 to 38 residents per county. These gatherings focused on capturing local perspectives and lived experiences of digital access, barriers, and existing resources. Participants shared personal challenges and accommodations related to internet service, device availability, and digital literacy, as well as ideas for addressing these gaps. The sessions also highlighted the vital role of schools, libraries, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations in supporting digital inclusion.

The listening sessions were conducted in partnership with trusted local organizations within the counties. Table 1 displays details about the listening sessions. These partnerships tapped into the experiences of several covered populations and therefore allowed ECC to connect with a broad cross-section of residents, including individuals from rural communities, low-income households, racial and ethnic minority groups, seniors, non-English speakers, military families, and households

with school-aged children. The listening sessions provided valuable insights into community-specific digital access challenges and opportunities. Findings were instrumental in shaping both localized action items and the broader regional digital inclusion strategy.

Please note that because only one listening session was conducted per county (with the exception of Carteret County), the perspectives captured reflect the experiences of the specific covered population invited to participate. As such, the insights gathered from these sessions are intended to represent and inform understanding of similar populations across the ECC region.

Table 1— Listening Session Schedule

County	Organization	Date of Session	Number of Attendees	Participant Population
Carteret	Carteret Correctional Facility	07-30-25 | 07-31-25	34	Incarcerated individuals
Craven	New Bern Housing Authority	2-26-25	18	Low income, Urban
Duplin	Duplin County Senior Services	09-25-25	16	Persons with disabilities, Veterans
Greene	Greene County Senior Services	11-15-24	23	Aging individuals
Jones	Jones County Community Hope	12-28-24	38	Aging individuals, Rural residents
Lenoir	Kinston Teens	12-09-24	10	Low income, Rural
Onslow	Onslow Community Outreach	09-15-25	5	Persons experiencing social displacement and homelessness, i.e., Low income, Veterans, Aging individuals
Pamlico	Heartworks	11-18-24	12	Members of racial and ethnic minority groups, rural residents,
Wayne	Wayne County Library	04-10-25	7	Members of racial and ethnic minority groups, rural residents, Individuals with barriers to the English language

In Carteret County, the team partnered with Carteret Correctional Center and Our Journey, and interviewed 34 inmates who were preparing to reintegrate into their communities within 90 days.

The listening sessions were done over two days at the Center. They shared their experiences with technology while being incarcerated, their fears surrounding digital navigation upon their release, and their need to be fully integrated. In Craven County, the team collaborated with the New Bern Housing Authority, where we connected with 18 low-income residents. The Duplin County session was hosted at the Duplin County Senior Services. We connected with 16 seniors, veterans and persons with disabilities where they shared their unique experiences and needs navigating technology. In Greene County, the team partnered with Greene County Senior Services to learn about the challenges facing seniors. Twenty-three participants were present. In Jones County, a partnership was established with Jones County Community Hope. This organization connected the team to a mix of 38 seniors and rural residents, who discussed their current approaches to troubleshooting their challenges. The Lenoir County listening session was done in collaboration with Kinston Teens to include the voices of 10 urban and rural residents. In Onslow County, we worked with the Onslow Community Outreach team to interview 5 socially displaced individuals representing a low income and veteran population. In Pamlico County, we partnered with HeartWorks and conducted a listening session with 12 residents who represented individuals from racial and ethnic minority groups and for the Wayne County listening session, we joined with the Wayne County Library where those who work with minorities, rural residents, farmworkers, and others with language barriers discussed challenges and potential solutions for these groups. These partnerships allowed ECC to connect with a broad cross-section of residents, with specific attention to covered populations.

Covered Populations: Eastern Carolina Council

Covered populations refer to groups of individuals who have historically faced greater barriers to digital access and participation. These barriers may include limited or unreliable broadband service, lack of affordable internet-ready devices, or insufficient digital skills to navigate online spaces safely and confidently.

Covered population include individuals who fall into one or more of following eight demographic categories:

1. Individuals living in households with incomes at or below 150% of the poverty line.
2. Individuals 60 years of age or older.
3. Veterans.
4. Individuals living with one or more disabilities.
5. Individuals with barriers to the English language (including English language learners and those with low literacy).
6. Members of racial and ethnic minority groups.
7. Individuals residing in rural areas.
8. Individuals incarcerated in a nonfederal correctional facility.

Each county within the Eastern Carolina Council (ECC) region has a distinct demographic composition and set of local circumstances that influence how these covered populations experience digital exclusion. Understanding these unique profiles is essential for tailoring digital inclusion strategies to ensure that initiatives, outreach, and resources are responsive to the specific needs, assets, and challenges present in each community. A detailed description of covered populations for each county is provided in the county profiles that follow to ensure that digital inclusion strategies are grounded in the local context.

Steering Committee

To guide the review and refinement of this plan, ECC convened a Regional Steering Committee on Digital Inclusion on May 2, 2025. Committee members represented all nine counties in areas of sectors of education, technology, non-profits, social services, library services, senior services

The Steering Committee Meeting met on the following dates and addressed the following goals:

May 2, 2025 – Convening the Steering Committee & Initial Findings

June 10, 2025 – County-by-County Review

Dec 9, 2025 – Review of Draft Digital Inclusion Plan and Feedback

Between meetings, Steering Committee members provided information and connected the plan-writing team to key resources in their respective counties.

General Membership Board

The draft Digital Inclusion plan was sent to the General Membership Board on December 29th, 2025, for review and feedback. The final plan was presented and endorsed at the General Membership Board meeting on January 8th, 2026.

Current State of Digital Inclusion

The current state of digital inclusion across the ECC region provides the essential foundation for understanding both the progress to date and the challenges that remain in ensuring sustainable access to digital opportunities. Broadband availability alone does not guarantee participation. Meaningful inclusion for this region requires that households adopt service, have access to reliable devices, develop the skills and confidence to use technology, and be able to afford the costs associated with connectivity.

This section examines **available broadband connectivity, broadband adoption, device access, digital literacy and technical support, affordability and assets** at the county level to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for targeted strategies that advance digital participation throughout ECC. To evaluate digital inclusion in the region, this plan draws on multiple data sources, including the FCC National Broadband Map (June 2024, version 6); NC Broadband Adoption Index; the United States Census Bureau American Community Survey Data; and the NCDIT Digital Opportunity Survey. The Digital Opportunity Survey was launched in 2023 and captured information about the digital needs of residents across North Carolina. The survey reported data on the following number of respondents per county: Carteret County (n=33), Craven County (n=136), Duplin County (n=54), Greene County (n=70), Jones County (n=38), Lenoir County (n=31), Onslow County (n=75), Pamlico County (n=61), Wayne County (n=64).

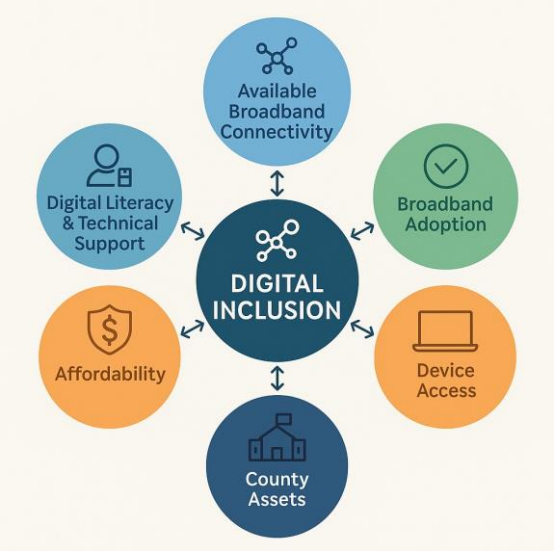
This plan also utilized the internet service provider (ISP) coverage reports. The number of internet service providers (ISPs) is directly related to the availability and competitiveness of broadband infrastructure in a county. More ISPs often mean:

- Better pricing options (affordability through market competition)
- Greater chance of higher-speed access
- More consumer choice for residents and businesses

In addition, this plan relied on county-level listening sessions which further substantiated the data and contextualized the lived experiences of residents across the counties. Finally, the plan drew on the resources cataloged in the NC Tech Resource Finder, which is a statewide online tool that makes it easy for residents to locate technology support by type and location. Together, these data sources provide a comprehensive picture of digital inclusion across the region; informs the county-by-county profiles that follow; and guides the development of targeted objectives and strategies to advance digital equity throughout the ECC region.

Digital Inclusion Framework

The following six domains form the framework used to assess the current state of digital inclusion across all ECC counties. Each domain reflects a critical component of digital participation and guides the structure of the county profiles.



Available broadband connectivity refers to the physical availability of high-speed internet service capable of supporting essential modern activities such as remote work, telehealth, virtual learning, and streaming. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) currently defines broadband as service with minimum speeds of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload. However, many state and federal programs, including North Carolina's Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) initiative, have shifted toward a higher benchmark of 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload, which is increasingly recognized as the emerging standard. Available broadband connectivity focuses on the infrastructure that enables connectivity, including fiber, cable, DSL, and fixed wireless technologies. It addresses the fundamental question: *can residents in this area obtain broadband if they choose to subscribe*? This is distinct from adoption, which considers whether households actually subscribe to and use the service once it is available.

Broadband adoption refers to whether households choose to subscribe to and regularly use the internet service available to them. While infrastructure may be present, various barriers, such as affordability, limited digital skills, or a lack of perceived relevance, can prevent residents from going online. Adoption rates are often lower among low-income households, older residents, and rural populations, who may face multiple overlapping challenges. Understanding adoption patterns is critical for guiding outreach, education, and support programs that move households from mere access to active and meaningful participation in the digital economy.

Device access reflects whether residents have reliable, internet-enabled devices such as desktop computers, laptops, tablets, or smartphones. Without suitable devices, residents are unable to fully participate in opportunities such as online education, job searches, or telehealth services. Many households rely on sharing a single device or depend solely on a smartphone, which may not be adequate for more complex digital tasks. Expanding device access often requires coordinated local efforts, such as community-based lending programs, device refurbishment and donation initiatives, or subsidies to support low-income families in acquiring affordable devices.

Digital literacy and technical support encompass the skills and assistance that residents need to confidently, safely, and effectively use the internet and digital tools. Digital literacy ranges from basic skills, such as using email and video conferencing, to more advanced competencies, including online safety and privacy protection. Technical support ensures that residents have access to help when devices malfunction or connectivity issues arise. Many residents, particularly seniors and first-time users, require both training and ongoing support to build digital confidence. Institutions such as libraries, schools, workforce centers, and nonprofit organizations often serve as critical hubs for providing digital skills training and technical assistance across the region.

Affordability is a foundational element of digital inclusion, referring to the cost of both internet service and devices relative to household income. Even in areas where broadband infrastructure is available, many households remain unconnected due to high monthly subscription costs or the upfront expense of purchasing devices. Federal programs, such as the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), helped reduce these costs for residents in those areas with existing broadband service. By not continuing to fund the program, many of the 23 million who used it can no longer afford broadband access. In the absence of federal programs, local affordability strategies may include promoting subsidies, partnering with providers to negotiate community-based pricing, and expanding access to free public Wi-Fi in key community locations.

Current State of Digital Inclusion- Regional Overview

Broadband Availability

Across the nine counties in the Eastern Carolina Council (ECC) region, broadband access is shaped by a mix of fiber, cable, DSL, and fixed-wireless technologies. Table 2 highlights the varied service provider options across the region. While most counties have several providers, the distribution of high-capacity technologies such as fiber and cable remains uneven. Availability is widespread across the region, but important gaps remain in rural areas where households may have few, low-quality, or no practical broadband options. Cable networks remain the most consistently available wired technology, while DSL and fixed-wireless are present in nearly all counties but often serve as fallback options in areas where higher-capacity wired infrastructure is limited or unavailable.

Wired broadband showed three clear patterns. First, cable networks are the most consistently available high-speed option, but coverage varies widely. Spectrum cable is nearly universal in counties such as Carteret, Onslow, Pamlico, and Wayne, with coverage ranging from roughly 77 percent to 99 percent in those locations, yet has a limited presence in counties such as Greene, Lenoir, Craven, and Jones, where cable reaches only 1.5 percent to about 33 percent of locations. Optimum provides additional cable coverage in several counties. Second, fiber availability differs

significantly across the region. Some counties benefit from strong fiber networks offered by MetroNet, Infinity Link, and AT&T and Earthlink, while others have limited fiber presence or coverage concentrated only in populated areas. Third, DSL remains widespread and often fills gaps where cable and fiber are limited. Although DSL typically covers 70 percent to 95 percent of locations, speeds below 50 Mbps make it insufficient for many modern household needs.

Fixed-wireless also plays an important but inconsistent role. Several providers extend service in rural and hard-to-reach areas, however, speeds and reliability vary greatly by county and provider. US Cellular provides the broadest footprint across the region, with coverage ranging from about 68 percent in Onslow County to nearly 98 percent in Lenoir County. Although widely available, speeds generally fall between 15 and 35 Mbps, offering only basic connectivity. T-Mobile Home Internet reaches between 48 percent of locations in Pamlico County and 86 percent in Greene County, with advertised speeds typically between 50 and 75 Mbps. Verizon's fixed-wireless service is more variable, covering as little as 14 percent of locations in Pamlico County and more than 60 percent in Carteret County, often offering higher advertised speeds of 120 to 260 Mbps where service is available. Regional providers such as Open Broadband and Eastern Carolina Broadband add options in specific counties, with coverage ranging from less than 2 percent to more than 96 percent depending on the location. These providers help fill gaps where wired infrastructure is limited.

Despite improving availability, fixed-wireless remains an inconsistent alternative to high-capacity wired networks. Performance depends on tower distance, terrain, and network congestion, making it a necessary but limited option for many rural households. Continued investment in wired infrastructure is essential for closing access gaps and improving reliability across the region.

Table 2 - Internet Service Providers in the ECC

	A T & T	Brightspeed	Earthlink	Eastern Carolina	Focus Broadband	Infinity	Lumos	Mediacom	Metronet	Open Broadband	Optimum	Spectrum	Star Communications	T Mobile	US Cellular	Verizon
Carteret		✔										✔		✔	✔	✔
Craven		✔							✔		✔	✔		✔		✔
Duplin	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔					✔		✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Greene		✔				✔		✔		✔	✔	✔		✔	✔	✔

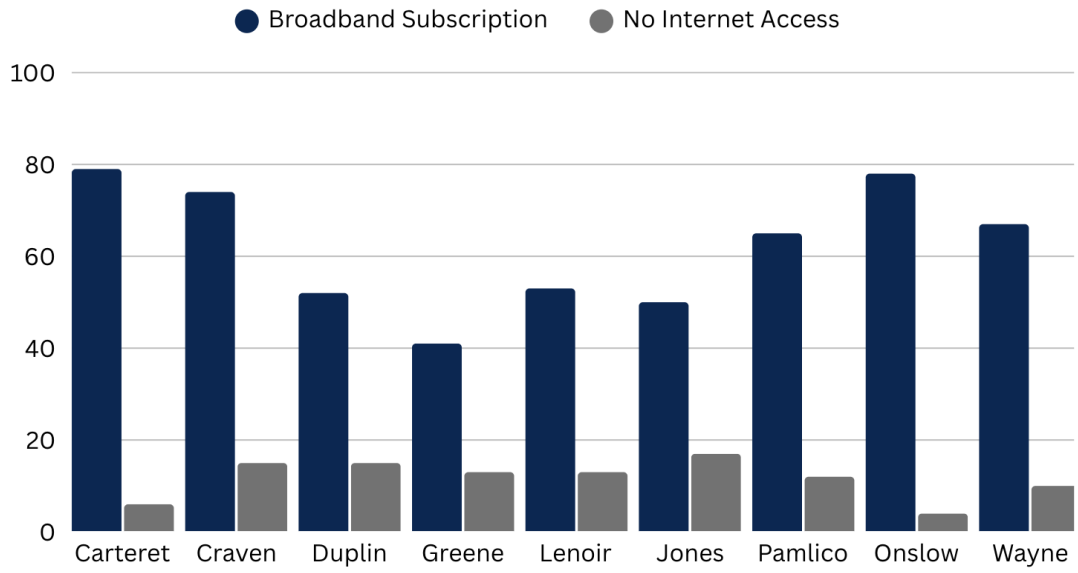
Jones		✔		✔					✔	✔	✔	✔		✔	✔	✔
Lenoir		✔				✔					✔	✔			✔	
Onslow		✔							✔			✔		✔	✔	✔
Pamlico		✔									✔	✔		✔	✔	✔
Wayne	✔	✔	✔				✔			✔	✔	✔		✔	✔	✔

Source: ISP Reports

Broadband Adoption

Broadband adoption varies widely across the nine counties in the Eastern Carolina Council region. Household subscription rates range from less than half of households in some counties to nearly four out of five in others. Carteret and Onslow counties report the highest adoption levels, with approximately 78 percent of households maintaining a broadband subscription and the lowest shares of households with no internet access at around 7 percent. Several counties fall in the mid-range, including Lenoir, Pamlico, and Wayne, where roughly 53 to 67 percent of households maintain subscriptions and 13 to 18 percent report no internet access.

Other counties face more significant adoption challenges. Duplin and Jones counties show subscription levels around 50 percent, with Jones County having the highest share of households with no internet access at more than 27 percent. Greene County reports the lowest adoption rate in the region, with only about 41 percent of households maintaining a broadband subscription and more than 20 percent reporting no access.



Across the region, these adoption patterns reflect the combined influence of affordability, availability of reliable service, digital skills, and residents' confidence in using technology. Affordability is the most consistent barrier to adoption. Across counties, residents identified monthly prices that exceed their budgets, particularly among older adults, low-income households, and families on fixed incomes. Affordable monthly rates reported by survey respondents ranged from about 52 dollars to 69 dollars, which is lower than many currently available service plans. Availability and service quality further limit adoption, particularly in rural areas where reliable or high-speed options are not consistently offered. Residents in multiple counties described difficulties obtaining service at their address and frustration with unreliable connections. Digital skills and confidence also affect adoption, with many residents expressing limited comfort using technology, concerns about online safety, and uncertainty about the value of home internet. These challenges are especially pronounced among older adults, individuals with limited formal education, and immigrant communities who face language and cultural barriers.

Broadband Infrastructure Investments Across ECC Counties

Across the ECC region, multiple counties have received state-supported broadband infrastructure awards through the Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) and Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) programs. A total of 24 awards were granted to internet service providers across eight of the nine counties (*see Table 3*). These awards support the deployment of fiber-based broadband infrastructure intended to expand high-speed internet access to unserved and underserved households and businesses. While several counties have benefited from these investments, award distribution has varied across the region, and at least one county reported no awards during the period reflected in the Infrastructure Awards data.

Table 3 - Broadband Awards in the ECC Region

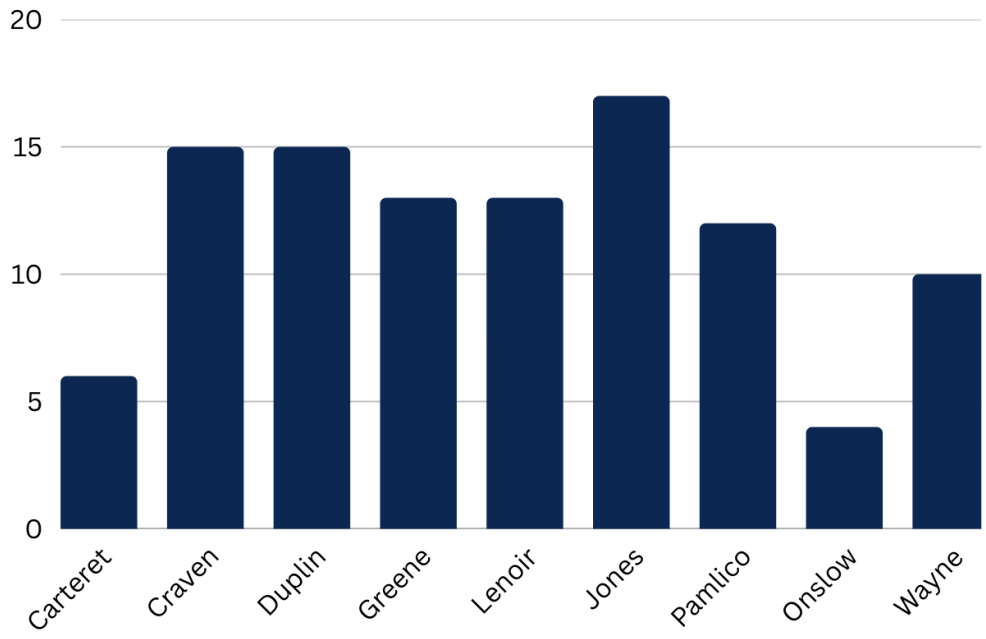
County	Total No. of Awards	GREAT Awards (Provider)	CAB Awards (Provider)	Households Served	Businesses Served
Carteret	2	1 (Brightspeed)	1 (Brightspeed)	791	55
Craven	3	1 (Brightspeed)	2 (Spectrum, Brightspeed)	2 ,144	53
Duplin	2	2 (FOCUS Broadband, Hosted America)	0	1, 887	33
Greene	3	2 (Brightspeed, InfinityLink Communications)	1 (Brightspeed)	4, 257	308

Jones	3	1 (Spectrum)	2 (Brightspeed)	812	33
Lenoir	0	0	0	-	-
Onslow	3	1 (Brightspeed)	2 (Spectrum, Brightspeed)	2. 235	265
Pamlico	4	1 (Spectrum)	3 (Brightspeed)	1, 300	36
Wayne	4	2 (InfinityLink Communications, Lumos)	2 (Spectrum, Brightspeed)	2, 127	62

Source: NC Broadband Awards Dashboard

Digital Devices

Access to reliable, functional digital devices remains a significant challenge across the Eastern Carolina Council region. Data from the Broadband Adoption Index show wide variation in device access, with the share of households lacking any computer device ranging from about 4 percent in Onslow County to more than 17 percent in Jones County. Several counties, including Duplin, Greene, Lenoir, Pamlico, and Wayne, report that more than one in ten households have no desktop, laptop, or tablet at home. These gaps make it difficult for many residents to participate in online learning, remote work, telehealth, and other essential digital activities that require more than a smartphone.



Survey data offer additional insight into whether households have enough devices to meet their daily needs. Across the region, responses vary widely, with between 60 percent and 86 percent of

residents saying their household has enough working devices. Counties such as Carteret, Craven, Lenoir, and Pamlico report the highest levels of access, with roughly eight in ten households having the devices they need. In contrast, Greene, Jones, Onslow, and Wayne counties show much higher levels of device shortage. In these counties, between one-quarter and one-third of households do not have enough working devices, often relying on shared, limited, or outdated technology that cannot fully support school, work, or online services.

Digital Literacy

Digital literacy needs across the region reflect a consistent pattern. Most residents report confidence with basic digital tasks such as turning on a device or sending emails, but significant gaps remain in more complex, safety-related, and service-related digital skills. Listening sessions reveal several barriers that affect participation in digital learning.

Many residents across Greene, Jones, Lenoir, Pamlico, Duplin, and Wayne counties expressed low confidence, fear of scams, and hesitation with using unfamiliar platforms. Across the region, older adults consistently reported the greatest challenges, including difficulty with basic navigation, passwords, and device management. Transportation barriers, limited class schedules, and uncertainty about where to find help further restrict participation, even where digital skills training programs exist.

In addition to the older population, other covered populations face additional challenges. Incarcerated residents in Carteret and Greene Counties reported having little to no experience with modern devices and emphasized the need for structured pre-release digital training. Immigrant residents in Wayne and Duplin Counties face language barriers that limit their ability to access online tools and training. Parents in Lenoir and Pamlico Counties expressed the need for support navigating school platforms such as PowerSchool and Google Classroom to support their children's learning.

Assets Across the Region

Digital inclusion assets across the region provide key access points for connectivity, devices, and skills training, although the scale of these resources varies by county. Carteret County has the highest number of total assets at 38, while most other counties have between 15 and 25 *(see Table 4*). Digital skills locations are consistently available across all counties and represent the most common asset type, ranging from 14 to 29 sites. Public computer and Wi-Fi access points vary more widely, from 4 locations in Greene County to 17 in Duplin County. Opportunities to obtain a computer or device are present in every county, ranging from 5 to 9 locations. Counties with fewer total assets, such as Greene, Jones, and Pamlico, have more limited public access and device distribution points.

Across the region, several asset types appear consistently and form the core of the digital inclusion network. Public libraries serve as primary access points in every county and provide public Wi-Fi, computer access, and digital skills support. Many systems also operate mobile units that extend services into rural areas. Senior centers offer digital skills help and computer use for older adults, while community colleges and K–12 schools provide digital training, public Wi-Fi, and device support for students and families. Community and faith-based organizations add further access points, especially in rural communities. Partnerships with groups such as the Kramden Institute support device distribution and digital skills classes in person and online. can be expanded across the region.

Although these assets form a strong foundation, they are often underutilized. Residents report barriers such as limited transportation, restricted hours of operation, lack of awareness, and low trust or discomfort with certain institutions. These barriers reduce the reach and impact of existing digital resources, particularly for residents who need them most. Addressing these access challenges will be essential to ensure that the region's digital assets are fully used and benefit all communities.

Table 4: Digital Inclusion Assets by County

County	Total Identified Assets	Digital Skills Help & Classes	Public Computer/Wi-Fi	Get a Computer or Device
Carteret	38	29	10	9
Craven	20	19	10	7
Duplin	29	14	17	7
Greene	15	15	4	6
Jones	17	17	7	6
Lenoir	20	20	8	7
Onslow	25	21	6	7
Pamlico	17	17	6	6
Wayne	22	19	11	5

Source: NC DIT

Looking Ahead: Building a Connected ECC Region

ECC's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and the ECC Regional Digital Inclusion Plan Connected

The Eastern Carolina Council's Digital Inclusion Plan directly supports and strengthens the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2023–2027. Digital access, digital skills, and affordable broadband are now essential infrastructure for economic growth. By aligning the digital inclusion goals with CEDS priorities, ECC positions the region for stronger workforce development, increased business competitiveness, enhanced quality of life, and improved economic resilience.

CEDS Priority 1: Cultivate & Champion Regional Collaboration

Digital Inclusion Alignment:

- The Digital Inclusion Plan creates a regional coordination system for broadband, devices, skills training, and cybersecurity.
- A Digital Navigator Network and county-level technical hubs bring together schools, libraries, nonprofits, local governments, and workforce boards.
- This collaboration strengthens CEDS goals around unified regional action and shared planning.

The expected impact of the Digital Inclusion Plan for the CEDS Priority 1 will be increased regional alignment in grant applications, economic development planning, and community engagement.

CEDS Priority 2: Develop Critical Infrastructure & Support Disaster Resiliency

Digital Inclusion Alignment:

- Broadband is recognized in the plan as critical economic infrastructure, as essential as water, sewer, roads, and electricity.
- The plan advances expansion of high-speed broadband into unserved and underserved areas, supporting economic diversification and disaster recovery.
- Public Wi-Fi zones, mapping of service gaps, and partnerships with providers improve regional continuity and resilience.

The expected impact of the Digital Inclusion Plan under CEDS Priority 2 will be improved broadband access that supports business growth, enables remote work and telehealth, and strengthens emergency communications.

CEDS Priority 3: Grow & Support a Skilled Workforce

Digital Inclusion Alignment:

- The plan's Digital Navigator Network, device-access programs, and community trainings expand digital skills across nine counties.
- Digital literacy improves residents' ability to access jobs, online applications, remote learning, and sector-specific skills.
- Older adults, returning citizens, veterans, and English-language learners receive targeted support, helping them re-enter or advance in the workforce.

The expected impact of the Digital Inclusion Plan for the CEDS Priority 3 will be a digitally competent workforce that enhances competitiveness, supports employer needs, and improves military talent retention which is key CEDS workforce strategy.

CEDS Priority 4: Create Healthy & Connected Communities

Digital Inclusion Alignment:

- Digital access supports telehealth, online education, government services, small business growth, and civic participation.
- Affordable connectivity and devices reduce barriers for rural residents, seniors, low-income households, and underserved groups.
- A regional cybersecurity effort improves safety, trust, and overall digital resilience.

The expected impact of the Digital Inclusion Plan for the CEDS Priority 4 will be a better quality of life, stronger connections across rural communities, and increased access to the digital tools needed for modern living.

Goals, Objectives, Metrics

The following goals, objectives, and metrics outline a coordinated path forward for advancing digital inclusion across the Eastern Carolina Council region. Developed in direct response to the needs, gaps, and assets identified in the county profiles, these strategies translate regional insights into clear and actionable priorities. Each goal is paired with measurable objectives to ensure accountability, track progress over time, and guide collaborative efforts among local governments, community organizations, educational institutions, and residents. Together, these targets form the framework for building a more connected and resilient digital future for all communities within the ECC region.

Goal 1: Ensure universal access to reliable and affordable internet connectivity.

Objectives:

1. Expand high-speed internet coverage to underserved and unserved areas in the Eastern Carolina region.

    Metrics:

    1. *Establish one advocacy effort annually with the NCDIT Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program BEAD to ensure that every household and business in unserved and underserved areas of the region has access to high-speed internet.*

    2. *Provide an annual report with baseline and intervention data on unserved and underserved metrics*

2. Establish and promote public Wi-Fi zones and community internet access points.

    Metrics:

    1. *Include a "Wi-Fi for All" effort within a regional digital Bridge-the-Gap campaign to increase awareness of free/low-cost public Wi-Fi and community access locations*

3. Track regional broadband adoption benchmarks (such as, digital opportunity survey, broadband maps to measure progress toward universal access.

Goal 2: Increase access to digital devices

Objectives:

1. Expand device availability through partnerships with refurbishing organizations and nonprofits

    Metrics:

    1. *Maintain at least two active partnerships each year with organizations or refurbishers that support device donation and distribution*

    2. *Formalize and document standard operating procedures for device donation and distribution*

2. Ensure devices and connectivity tools are accessible, reliable, and meet community needs

    Metrics:

    1. *Design and conduct an annual community device needs survey to identify gaps in device type, quality, and availability.*
    2. *Utilize the Office of Digital Opportunity's 2026 survey when released to inform digital opportunity assessments.*
    3. *Partner with community organizations to ensure that surveys reach to covered populations within the counties.*

3. Increase access to portable connectivity tools (hotspots, chargers, accessories)

    Metrics:

    1. *Establish phone and device charging stations in public spaces. Target spaces that are accessible to socially displaced individuals (i.e. homeless shelters, soup kitchens, pantries]*
    2. *Partner with libraries, senior centers and schools to expand hotspot lending programs*

Goal 3: Increase digital literacy and skills for all residents

Objectives:

1. Establish and support community-based digital navigators

    Metrics:

    1. *Convene a homegrown digital navigation team (task force) that meets monthly to share ideas, create tutorials, and partner on local training offerings.*
    2. *Train and certify at least two community digital navigators per county*

2. Deliver digital literacy training in accessible, community-centered spaces

    Metrics:

    1. *Each county hosts at least 3 digital literacy classes/workshops annually in community-based locations such as churches, community centers, and mobile libraries.*

3. Provide inclusive, tailored training and resources for diverse and vulnerable populations

Metrics:

1. *Create at least two online digital training tutorials or access existing trainings in multiple languages suitable for the demographics of the region. [Make accessible to justice-involved individuals preparing for re-entry]*

Goal 4: Provide ongoing, high-quality technical support.

Objectives:

1. Establish a regional technical-support network.

   Metrics:

   1. *Create and maintain a regional help-desk system (phone, email, chat, or in-person) available to residents and small businesses.*
   2. *Designate technical-support hubs in each county (libraries, senior centers, or community colleges).*
   3. *Develop a marketing initiative to support residents' use of the system*
   4. *Provide an annual report with baseline and intervention data on use of service*

2. Train and equip local homegrown digital navigation team

   Metrics

   1. *Conduct at least one training per quarter with the digital navigation team to prepare them for device troubleshooting, setup, connectivity assistance and other areas of support. Ensure that training allows them to keep up with emerging technologies*
   2. *Maintain a database of trained digital helpers and update it quarterly with availability, skills, and training status.*

Goal 5: Strengthen community capacity to prevent, identify, and respond to cybersecurity threats and online safety risks.

Objectives:

1. Build cybersecurity awareness through community education and outreach

   Metrics:

1. *Include a cybersecurity awareness effort in the regional digital Bridge-the-Gap campaign focused on safe internet use, privacy protection, and recognizing scams.*

2. *Partner with schools, libraries, and local organizations to host at least one cybersecurity workshops and safety event per year.*

2. Provide training and resources for individuals, families, and small businesses to enhance online safety

    Metrics:

    1. *Develop cyber safety training modules for different audiences (youth, seniors, small business owners, parents) to include in the digital navigation team training materials.*

    2. *Establish partnerships with local chambers of commerce and small business networks to deliver one cyber hygiene training.*

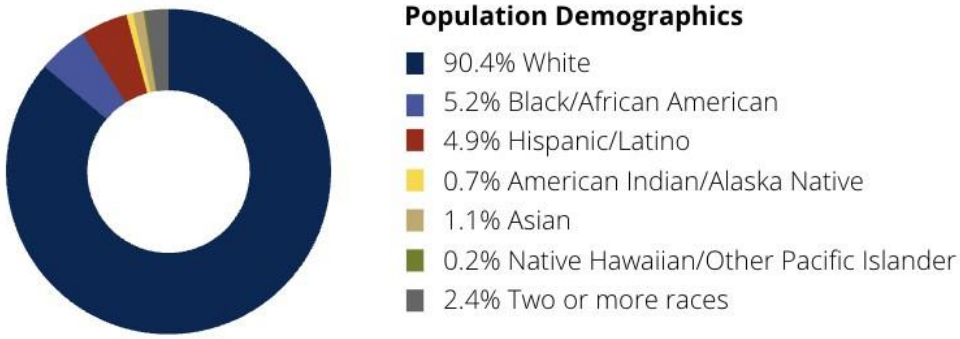
Goals Summary

These goals, objectives, and metrics establish a coordinated vision for advancing digital inclusion across the ECC region. They offer a practical roadmap that addresses gaps in connectivity, devices, skills, technical support, and online safety while building on the strengths and partnerships already present in each county. By grounding the work in measurable outcomes and shared responsibility, this framework positions the region to make sustained progress toward a more digitally connected and empowered future. As counties, organizations, and residents work collectively toward these targets, the ECC region will be better equipped to ensure that every community, regardless of geography, income, or background, has the tools, skills, and support needed to participate fully in today's digital world.

Current State of Digital Inclusion- County Profiles

Carteret County

Carteret County, located along North Carolina's Crystal Coast, is a largely rural and coastal county known for its fishing industry, marine science institutions, tourism, and scenic barrier islands. The county spans approximately 1,330 square miles, including land and extensive water areas, and is home to around 69,000 residents as of 2024. With a population density of roughly 115 persons per square mile, the county includes both small waterfront communities and more developed areas like Morehead City, Beaufort, and Atlantic Beach. The local economy is shaped by commercial and recreational fishing, marine research, tourism, and military support services, with a growing number of retirees relocating to the region.



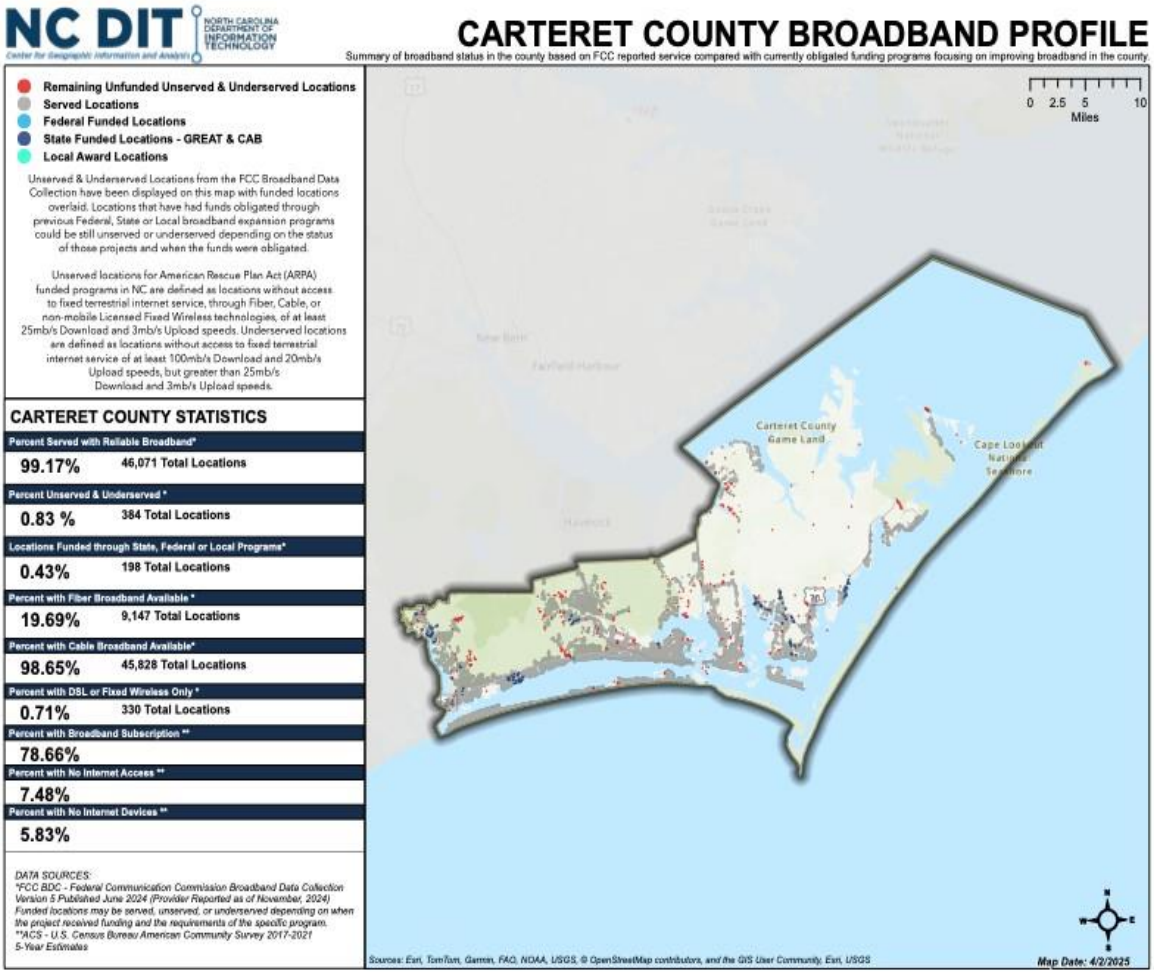
Carteret County's population groups reflect a range of demographic and socioeconomic needs that inform the county's digital inclusion priorities. About 37.47% of residents are aged 60 or older, reflecting a sizable aging population that may require targeted support in technology access and digital literacy. Individuals with disabilities make up 19.68% of the population, and veterans account for 11.01%, highlighting the need for inclusive programs and accessible technology solutions. Economic vulnerability is also evident, with 16.96% of residents living at or below

150% of the federal poverty level and 1.64% incarcerated. The county remains largely rural (36.20%), which impacts broadband availability and affordability in certain areas. While language barriers are relatively limited, 1.32% of residents are English learners and 1.03% face low literacy challenges. Additionally, 9.6% of residents identify as part of an ethnic or racial minority group.

Despite its natural assets and economic connections to coastal industries, Carteret County faces persistent challenges in achieving digital equity. Barriers such as limited broadband infrastructure in rural areas, uneven internet service provider coverage, device access, gaps in digital skills, and affordability restrict full participation in essential aspects of modern life. These challenges are especially significant for aging residents, students, and workers who increasingly rely on digital tools for education, employment, healthcare, and staying connected. The following sections provide a snapshot of Carteret County's digital landscape and identify opportunities to expand reliable, inclusive digital access for all residents.

Available Broadband Connectivity and Adoption

In Carteret County, 99.17% of locations have access to reliable broadband, and 0.83% are unserved or underserved. Cable is available to 98.65% and fiber to 19.69%, while 0.71% have only DSL or fixed wireless. Among all ECC counties, Carteret has the highest percentage of locations served with reliable broadband (99.17%), but the gaps are significant. Unfunded, unserved, and underserved areas are sporadic—east of Peletier; on the outskirts of Newport; west of North River; and in large areas near Merrimon. The highest concentration of served locations is mostly along the coast—along NC Highway 24; from The Point (Emerald Isle) through Atlantic Beach; north of Cape Carteret along NC Highway 58; and in and around Beaufort, and the area between Marshallberg and Otway and inland around Newport and along the US 70 corridor.



Source: [NC OneMap]

Carteret County is served by approximately five residential internet providers across fiber, cable, DSL, and fixed-wireless (*see Table 5)*. Spectrum's cable network is nearly universal, reaching 99.0% of locations at 1,000 Mbps, with a smaller Spectrum fiber footprint at 5.9%. Brightspeed offers fiber to 43.9% of locations at about 1,078 Mbps and maintains wide DSL availability to 89.2% at 48 Mbps, which helps cover areas where fiber or cable are limited. Fixed-wireless adds additional choices. T-Mobile Home Internet covers 83.8% of locations at about 75 Mbps, US Cellular reaches 90.9% at about 14 Mbps, and Verizon covers 61.5% at about 186 Mbps. Together, these options give most households at least one workable path online, though some pockets still depend on DSL or wireless where higher-capacity wired service is not yet in place.

Table 5: Internet Service Providers - Carteret County

Internet Service Provider	Connection	Availability	Average Download Speed

Spectrum	Fiber	5.9%	1,000 Mbps
	Cable	99.0%	1,000 Mbps
Brightspeed	Fiber	43.9%	1,078 Mbps
	DSL	89.2%	48 Mbps
US Cellular	Fixed Wireless	90.9%	14 Mbps
T-Mobile Home Internet	Fixed Wireless	83.8%	75 Mbps
Verizon	Fixed Wireless	61.5%	186 Mbps

Source: ISP Reports

Listening sessions at the Carteret County Correctional Center indicate that incarcerated individuals access the internet through assigned digital tablets for up to three hours per day. That time is split among contacting family, using pre-installed applications, and engaging with approved training or education materials. Many participants report reaching their daily limit though additional time can be purchased. They also described frequent connectivity problems, which reduce the value of the limited time they are offered.

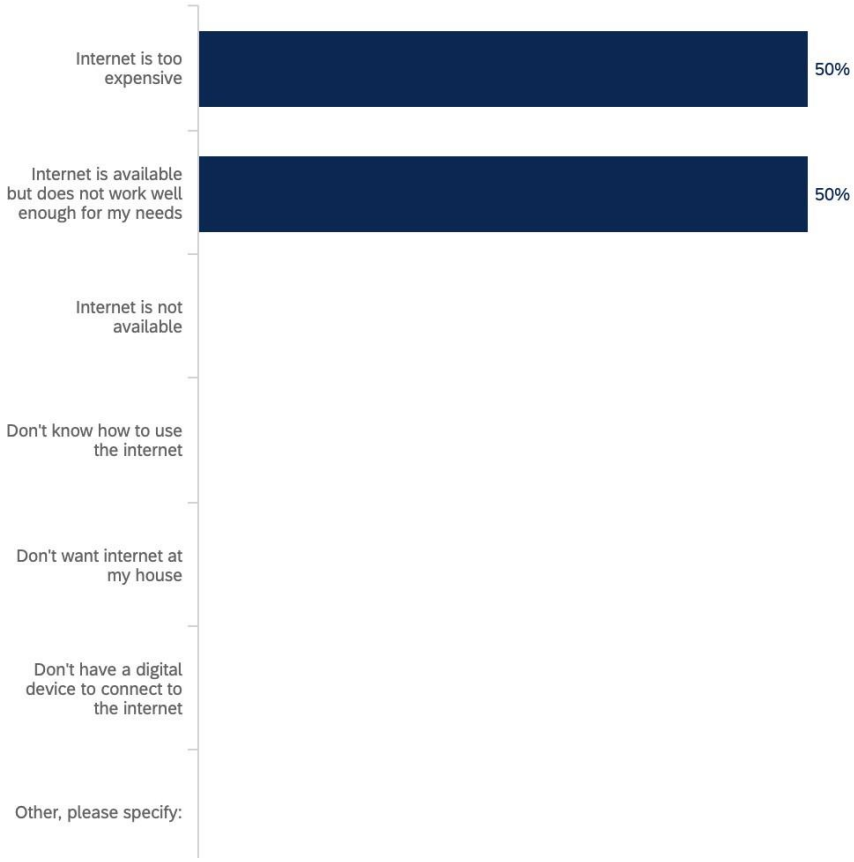
Broadband Infrastructure Investments

Carteret County has received two broadband infrastructure awards through state-supported expansion programs. These include one GREAT award and one CAB award, both granted to Brightspeed. Together, these projects are intended to serve 791 households and 55 businesses through the installation of fiber-based broadband infrastructure, expanding access in unserved and underserved areas of the county.

Adoption

In terms of broadband adoption, 78.66% of households in Carteret County maintain a broadband subscription, while 7.48% report having no internet access. This adoption rate is the highest subscription rate among ECC counties. Digital Opportunity Survey data suggest that the high costs of internet subscriptions and reliability of service are primary barriers for residents' participation. Residents who completed the survey suggested an average of $62 as an affordable cost for home internet. They use the internet to access information on government services and resources and information from public health services. The end of the Affordable Connectivity Act program has resulted in some residents dropping internet services due to cost increase.

What is preventing you from accessing the internet? (n=4)



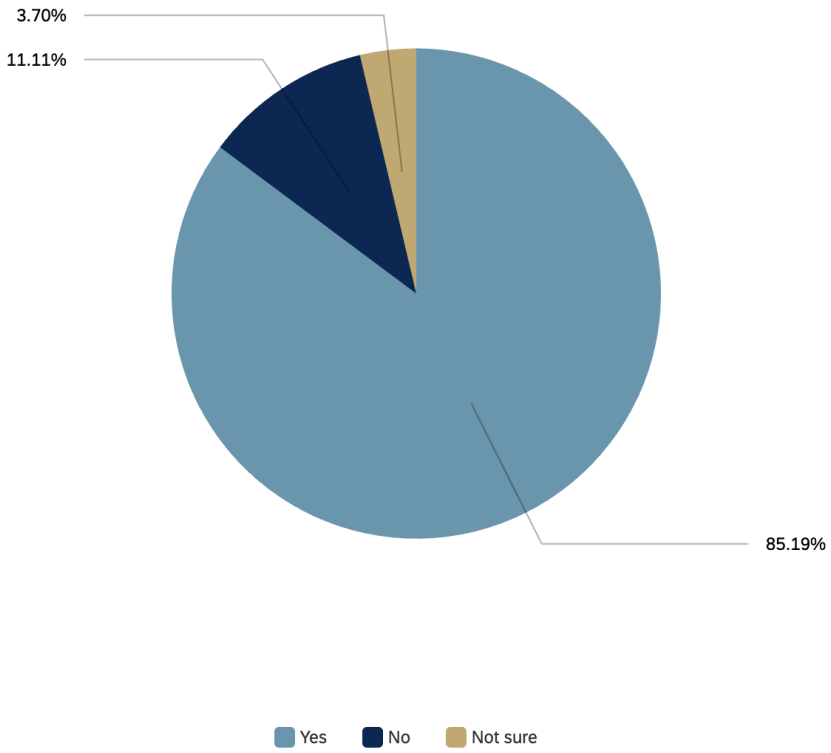
Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

Device Access

Reliable access to functional digital devices is essential for full participation in education, employment, and community life. In Carteret County, data from the Broadband Adoption Index show that 5.83% of households lack any computer devices, indicating that a portion of residents remain unable to connect meaningfully to online opportunities. While this percentage is somewhat lower than in other counties across the region, it still represents a significant digital access gap for the affected households.

Most Carteret County residents report sufficient device access (computers, smartphones, or tablets): 85.19% of respondents said their household has enough working devices to meet everyone's needs, while 11.11% said no and 3.70% were not sure. These responses suggest that approximately one in eight households experiences device shortages or relies on limited or shared devices, which can make it difficult for multiple family members to work, study, or access services simultaneously.

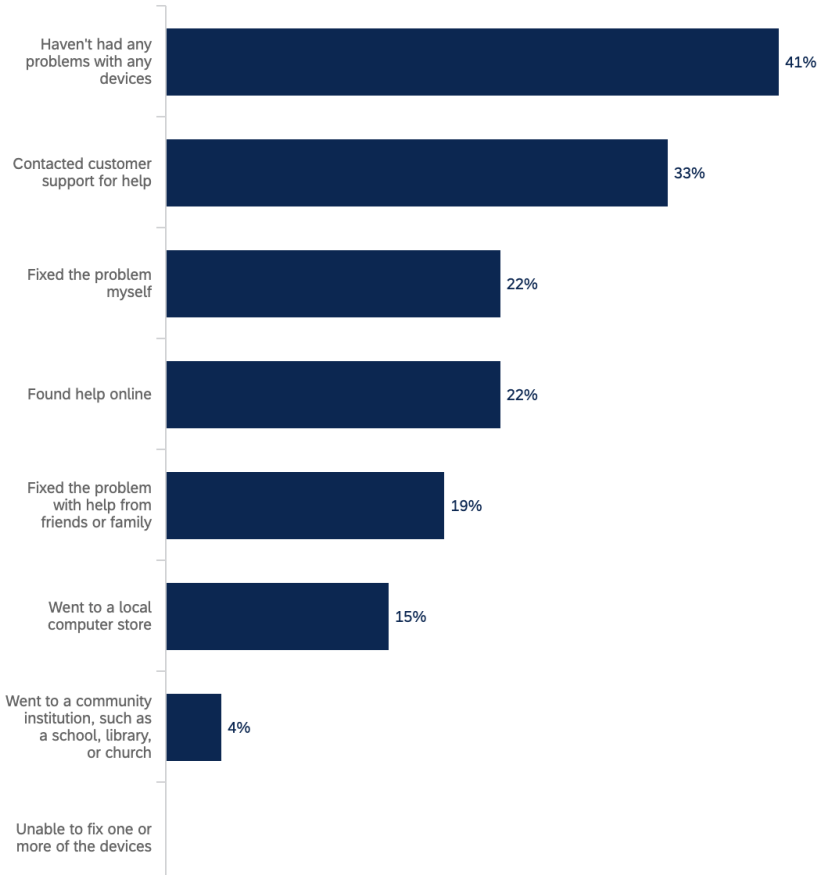
Does your household have enough working digital devices (computers, smart phones, tablets) available to meet the needs of everyone living in this home? (n=33)



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

A large proportion of residents (69%) reported experiencing problems with their digital devices within the past six months of taking the Digital opportunity survey. Residents cited contacting customer support (33%), trying to navigate the problem themselves (22%), or finding help online (22%) as the most common ways to get assistance with their device challenges. Very few residents turned to community institutions such as libraries, schools, or churches for assistance, suggesting that while such resources exist, they may be underused or less accessible to residents who need device support or repair.

In the past 6 months, if one of your digital devices failed to function, broke, or stopped working properly how did you deal with the problem you encountered? (Select all that apply)



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

Listening sessions in Carteret County provided unique insight into device access among incarcerated individuals, who often experience more severe digital inequities. Participants reported that some inmates have access to tablets or cell phones, but these devices are often outdated and limited in functionality. Inmates also have access to Hope University, which provides college-level courses and certificates, yet participation is constrained by the quality and availability of technology. Participants described a clear need for updated, reliable, and modern devices, noting that "the technology on the inside is twenty years behind." They also emphasized the importance of receiving training using updated devices and instructional materials to build skills that match the digital tools and opportunities that they would encounter upon reentry. Further, participants noted that many reentry and educational programs assume participants already have computer access, which is often not the case. This mismatch leaves returning citizens at a disadvantage when seeking employment, completing online applications, and simply trying to navigate the purchasing experience at a fast-food restaurant.

Digital Literacy

Digital literacy findings in Carteret County also reflect two distinct perspectives: those of the residents from the general public, represented through the Digital Opportunity Survey, and those of incarcerated residents, captured through targeted listening sessions. Together, these insights reveal both strengths and gaps in the community's digital skills, access, and confidence, underscoring the need for inclusive approaches that prepare all residents for meaningful participation in the digital world.

Survey data from the general public show that most Carteret County residents feel comfortable performing foundational digital tasks. The majority of respondents reported confidence in turning on a digital device (97%), sending emails (100%), and using online banking (92%). However, confidence declined for more advanced or security-related activities. The lowest confidence levels were reported in accessing or applying for government services (25% not confident or somewhat confident), protecting the privacy of personal data (21.4%), and knowing how to keep oneself safe online (17.9%). Moderate challenges were also noted in word processing (25%), finding educational content online (23%), and searching or applying for jobs (26%).

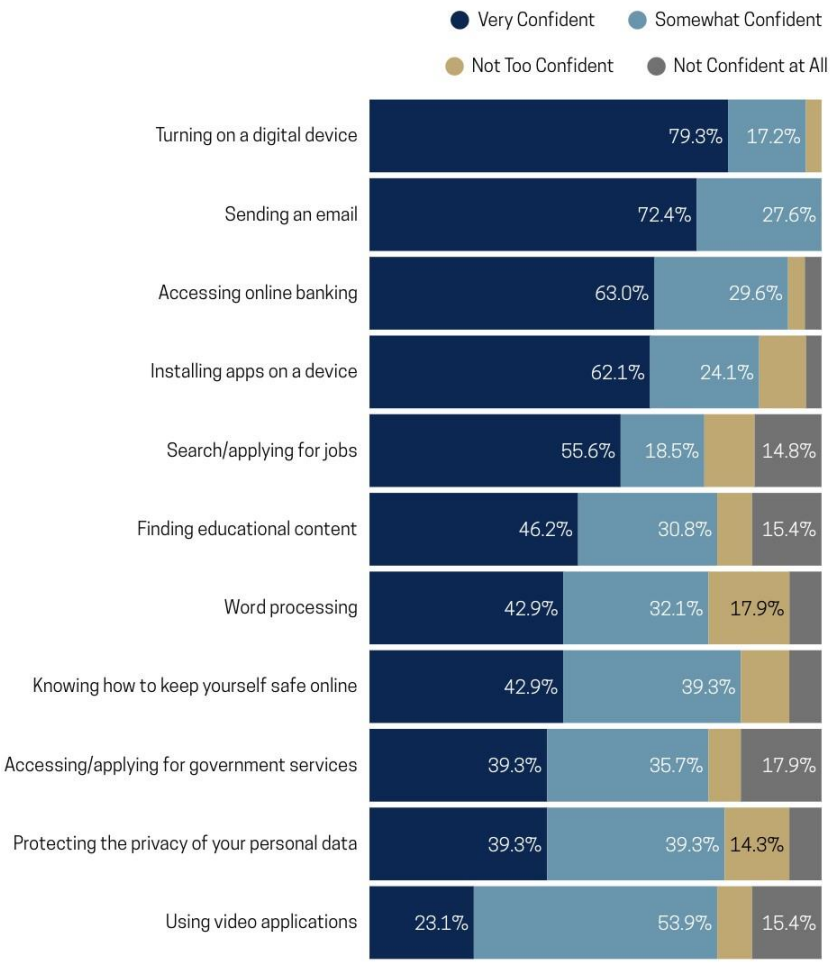
These results suggest that while most residents have solid foundational digital literacy skills, there is still a need for targeted education in cybersecurity, online safety, and privacy protection. Programs that help residents build confidence in managing personal data, understanding online risks, and safely navigating digital government platforms would help strengthen Carteret County's overall digital inclusion.

Listening sessions conducted with incarcerated individuals revealed a very different set of digital literacy needs. Participants described limited exposure to modern technology, with many having been incarcerated for years or even decades and lacking familiarity with everyday tools such as smartphones, email, online payments, and self-checkout systems. Some individuals had never used a smartphone or personal digital device prior to incarceration. Despite these challenges, participants expressed a strong desire to learn and recognized digital literacy as essential for rehabilitation and successful reentry into society. They appreciated the apps provided on facility tablets, such as access to a law library, which supports legal learning and self-sufficiency.

However, in the absence of formal digital literacy instruction, many inmates rely on peer-to-peer support, helping each other learn to navigate the device. Many reported limited instructions on using facility-provided tablets, especially for connecting to Wi-Fi and accessing permitted online content. They recommended improved connectivity and structured training sessions that focus on the safe and appropriate use of digital tools within correctional settings. Inmates also emphasized the importance of pre-release digital training, suggesting that digital literacy programs begin at least 90 days prior to release to build skills in smartphone use, email setup, online banking, job applications, and internet safety. They proposed a "train-the-trainer" model, where individuals with stronger digital skills or former inmates or mentors familiar with both correctional and

community environments are trained to serve as facilitators who could mentor others within the facility. This peer-led approach would create a sustainable learning structure and foster confidence through shared experience.

How confident are you in your abilities for each of the following tasks?



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

County Assets

Carteret County has a wide range of digital inclusion assets that provide residents with access to internet connectivity, public computers, and opportunities to build digital skills. The Carteret Regional Library System anchors this network, with branches such as Western Carteret Library, Down East Public Library, Bogue Banks Public Library, and Newport Public Library offering public Wi-Fi, device access, and in some locations, digital skills support. Additional resources such as Webb Memorial Library and Pearse Memorial Library at the Duke University Marine Lab expand access for specific communities, while NCWorks Career Center Carteret provides both

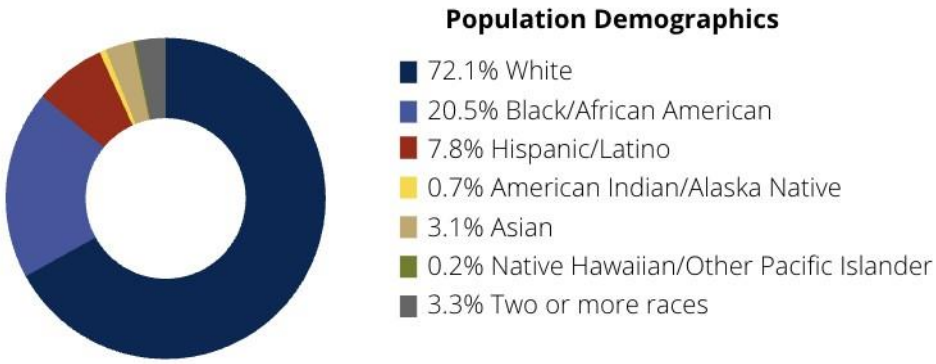
public computers and hands-on digital assistance to job seekers. These library, workforce, and community spaces form a strong foundation of accessible locations where residents can get online and receive technology help.

K–12 schools and higher education institutions further strengthen Carteret County's digital landscape. Several schools, including Harkers Island Elementary, Newport Middle School, Beaufort Elementary, Broad Creek Middle, Down East Middle/Smyrna Elementary, and White Oak Elementary, offer digital skills help or public Wi-Fi that supports students and families who rely on school-based access points. Carteret County Public Schools also maintain device access options, creating essential support for students without adequate resources at home. Carteret Community College enhances this learning ecosystem by providing public Wi-Fi and on-campus connectivity used for education, workforce development, and community needs. Targeted digital support for older adults is available through the Carteret Senior Services Center, which offers skill-building opportunities designed to increase confidence among residents who often face the greatest technology barriers. In addition to access and device supports, Carteret County institutions are also strengthening digital literacy around safe and responsible technology use. Both Carteret County Public Schools and Carteret Community College require mandatory online safety and awareness training for employees using the KnowBe4 platform, helping educators and staff build skills in recognizing online risks, protecting personal information, and modeling safe digital practices for students and community members.

Other organizations add depth to the county's digital inclusion environment. The Carteret Department of Social Services provides public computer access for residents navigating benefits and online services, while partners such as Kramden Institute support device distribution efforts that help close gaps in computer access. Calico Creek Coffee Shop at One Harbor Church offers another Wi-Fi access point, and the Carteret County Partnership for Children represents a valuable collaborator for family-centered digital inclusion strategies. The Carteret Correctional Facility and other community institutions also provide structured digital access and learning opportunities.

Craven County

Craven County is located in the Neuse River Basin in Eastern North Carolina and is the second-oldest county in the state. Although it is a predominantly rural area, there is a blend of urban spaces like New Bern and Havelock. Craven has a population of almost 104,000, spread across 706.57 square miles. With a population density of 142.5 persons per square mile, Craven is recognized for its cultural heritage, agriculture, tourism, and military presence. Its age distribution includes 21.2% children under 18 and 21.6% seniors, reflecting a significantly aging population. A majority of the population in Craven County identify as White with the next largest group identifying as Black or African American.



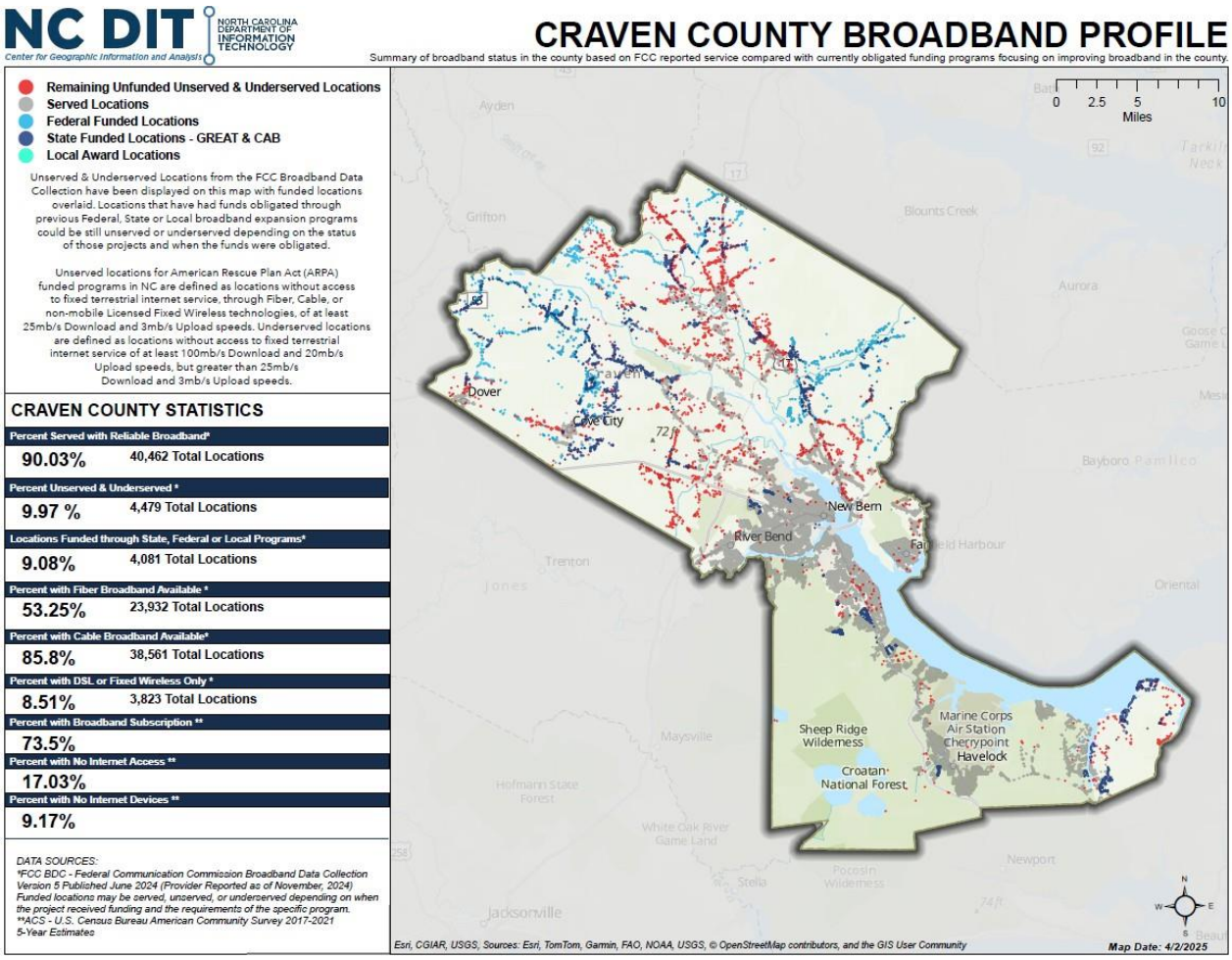
Craven County is home to several covered population groups whose demographic and socioeconomic needs shape the county's digital inclusion priorities. About 28.72% of residents are aged 60 or older, indicating a substantial aging population that may require additional support with technology use and access. Individuals with disabilities make up 18.75% of the population, and veterans represent 12.55%, underscoring the importance of accessible digital resources and services tailored to these groups. Economic vulnerability is also notable, with 22.74% of residents living at or below 150% of the federal poverty level and 1.77% incarcerated. Roughly one-third of

the county (33.17%) is classified as rural, suggesting that broadband expansion and affordability efforts remain priorities for residents outside city centers. While literacy and language barriers affect a smaller portion of the population, 1.53% of adults face literacy challenges, 2.89% are English learners, and 7% report limited English proficiency. Additionally, 27.9% of residents identify as part of an ethnic or racial minority group.

Despite its historical significance and economic anchors like agriculture, tourism, and the presence of Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, Craven County faces persistent challenges in achieving digital equity across its diverse population. As both younger families and an aging population navigate an increasingly digital world, disparities in broadband access, internet adoption, device availability, digital literacy, and affordability limit full participation in education, employment, healthcare, and civic life. Addressing these barriers is essential to ensuring that all residents, regardless of age, location, or income can engage meaningfully in the digital economy and access critical online resources. The following sections outline Craven County's current digital landscape and identify opportunities to strengthen inclusive and resilient connectivity across the community.

Available Broadband Connectivity and Adoption

In Craven County, 90.03% of locations have access to reliable broadband, and 9.97% are unserved or underserved. Fiber is available to 53.25% of locations and cable to 85.8%, while 8.51% have only DSL or fixed wireless. Unfunded, unserved, and underserved areas are concentrated mostly north of the county center and in the northern part of the county—along US 17 between Bridgeton and the Beaufort County line; around and north of Vanceboro; around Dover; a large area around Hymans; and northwest of Cove City along Old US Highway 70. The highest concentration of served locations is in the center of the county and south of New Bern along US 70, including RiverBend, Trent Woods, New Bern, Fairfield Harbor, and Havelock.



Source: NC OneMap

The county is served by approximately seven residential internet providers, including Brightspeed, Optimum, MetroNet, Spectrum, T-Mobile Home Internet, US Cellular, and Verizon (*see Table 6*). Service types span fiber, cable, DSL, and fixed wireless. MetroNet fiber reaches 53.5% of locations at 5,120 Mbps; Brightspeed fiber reaches 39.3% at 998 Mbps; Spectrum's fiber footprint is 10.9% at 1,000 Mbps. Cable options include Optimum at 66.5% at 940 Mbps and Spectrum at 25.7% at 1,000 Mbps. Brightspeed DSL remains widespread at 84.4% at 46 Mbps. Fixed-wireless coverage includes US Cellular at 87.8% at 35 Mbps, T-Mobile Home Internet at 82.5% at 69 Mbps, and Verizon at 45.4% at 198 Mbps. Despite the variety of technologies, many rural areas, north of the county center along US 17 between Bridgeton and the Beaufort County line, around and north of Vanceboro, around Dover, near Hymans, and northwest of Cove City along Old US Highway 70, often have only one or two providers, which limits competition and can affect service quality.

Table 6: Internet Service Providers - Craven County

Internet Service Provider	Connection	Availability	Average Download Speed
Brightspeed	Fiber	39.3%	998 Mbps
	DSL	84.4%	46 Mbps
Optimum	Cable	66.5%	940 Mbps
MetroNet	Fiber	53.5%	5,120 Mbps
Spectrum	Fiber	10.9%	1,000 Mbps
	Cable	25.7%	1,000 Mbps
US Cellular	Fixed Wireless	87.8%	35 Mbps
T-Mobile Home Internet	Fixed Wireless	82.5%	69 Mbps
Verizon	Fixed Wireless	45.4%	198 Mbps

Source: ISP Reports

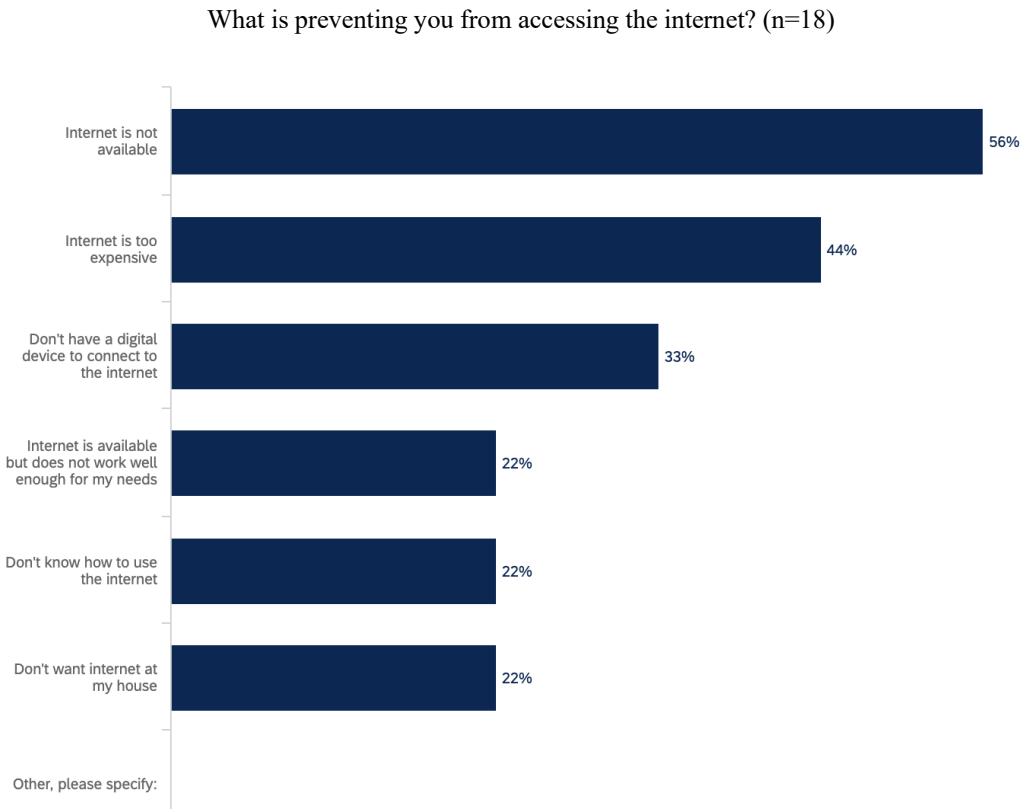
The listening session with Craven County residents highlighted persistent concerns about internet reliability, affordability, and availability, especially in rural and underserved areas. Service can vary street by street—some households qualify for certain providers while adjacent homes do not. Although seven providers serve the county, coverage is uneven: not all operate countywide, and service types and speeds differ by location, leaving many residents with only one or two viable options and limited bargaining power. Community members called for new and upgraded infrastructure to extend reach into rural communities, improve unreliable connections in areas that are technically served, and create conditions for greater competition and more affordable plans. Residents also stressed the need to address limited cell phone signal coverage, which further isolates residents who rely on mobile connectivity where stable broadband is lacking.

Broadband Infrastructure Investments

Craven County has received three state-supported broadband infrastructure awards through the Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) and Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) programs. These include one GREAT award granted to Brightspeed and two CAB awards granted to Spectrum and Brightspeed. Collectively, these investments are intended to support the deployment of fiber-based broadband infrastructure to 2,144 households and 53 businesses in unserved and underserved areas of the county. These projects are expected to expand access in locations where reliable high-speed service has historically been limited.

Adoption

In terms of broadband adoption, 73.5% of households maintain a broadband subscription, while 17.03% report having no internet access. The majority of respondents to the Digital Opportunity Survey without internet access identified either the unavailability of service (56%) or the high cost as the primary barriers (44%). Craven County has made progress in expanding internet access; however, disparities in digital adoption persist, particularly among rural residents, older adults, and those with limited digital literacy. Listening session data suggested that while many residents use the internet for everyday activities like streaming, social media, and basic communication, barriers such as a lack of digital skills and distrust in technology continue to limit full engagement in the digital world. Concerns around affordability were echoed in the session.



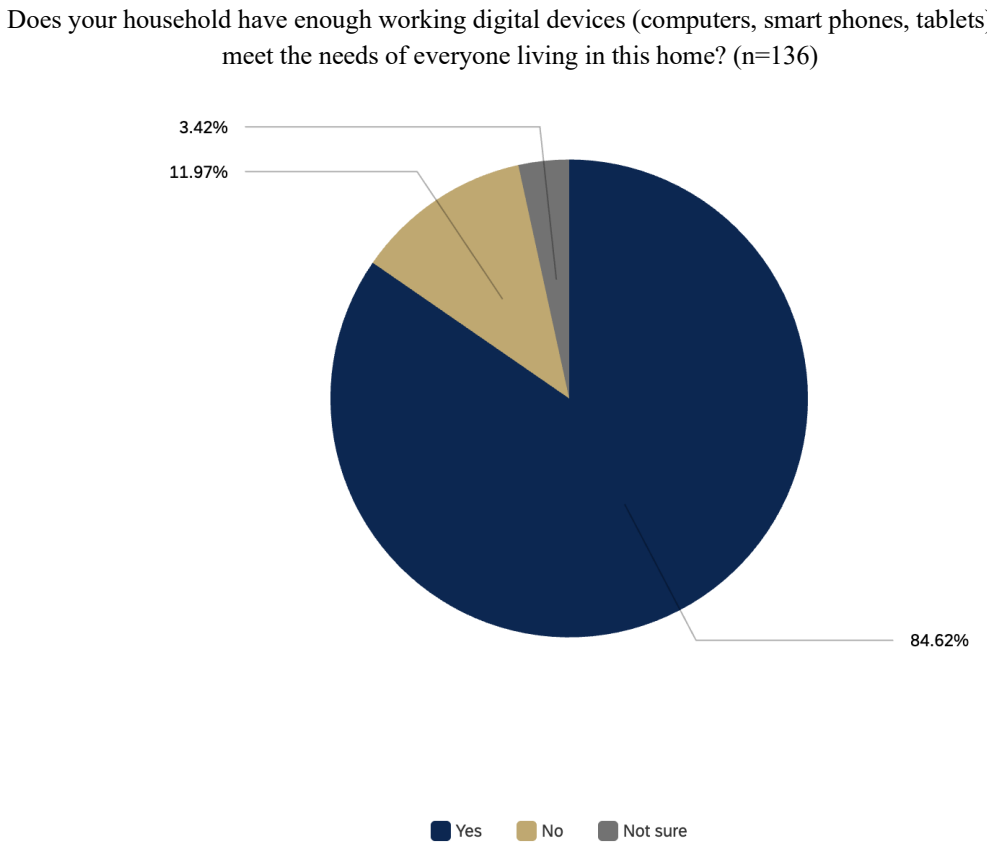
Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

Device Access

Access to functioning, reliable digital devices is a key component of digital inclusion in Craven County. According to the Broadband Adoption Index, 9.17% of households in Craven County lack any computer devices, placing these residents at higher risk of digital exclusion. While most

households report owning at least one internet-capable device, not all households have enough devices, or the right types of devices, to meet the everyday needs of work, learning, communication, and essential services.

Findings from the Digital Opportunity Survey revealed a similar pattern and added more context to these findings. When asked whether their household had enough working digital devices to meet the needs of everyone living in the home, 84.62% of Craven County respondents said yes, 11.97% said no, and 3.42% were not sure. This means that roughly one in eight households lacks sufficient device access, which can create challenges for multi-person households, families supporting school-aged children, and individuals who rely on multiple devices for work or daily responsibilities.

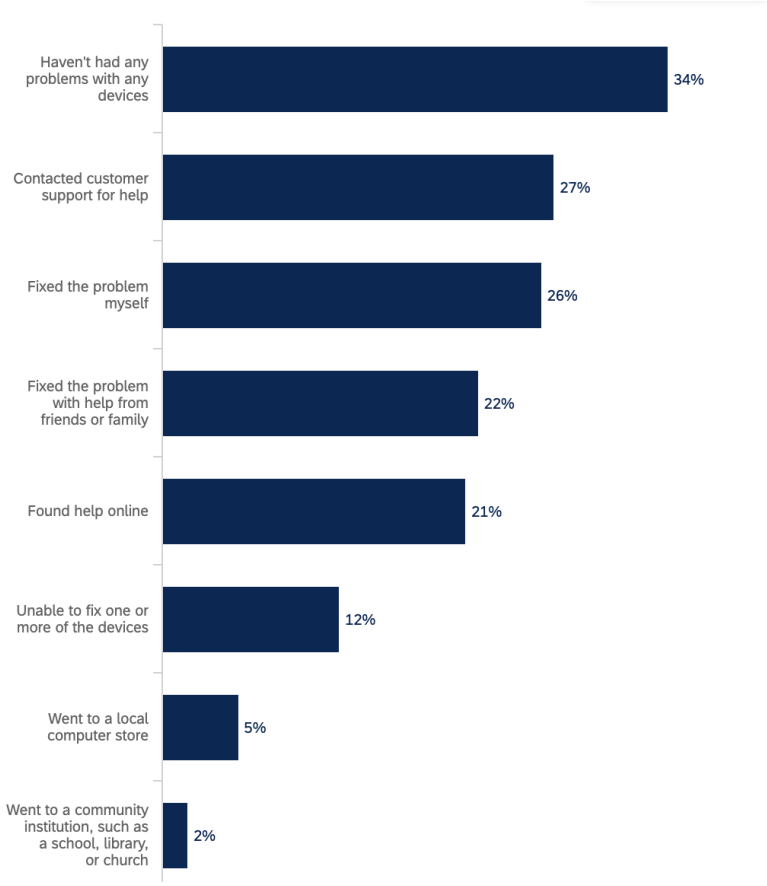


Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

Further, the survey showed that 64% of respondents had problems with a device in the past 6 months of completing the survey. These individuals commonly chose to contact customer support or attempt (27%) to fix the problem themselves (26%). Notably, far fewer residents relied on community institutions, such as schools, libraries, or churches, for help (2%). This indicates that

while community spaces may offer devices or technical support, many residents either do not know about these resources or cannot access them easily.

In the past 6 months, if one of your digital devices failed to function, broke, or stopped working properly how did you deal with the problem you encountered? (Select all that apply)



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

The county listening session offered additional insight to this data. Residents noted that existing devices in community centers, such as libraries, recreation centers, and other public spaces, are not always fully utilized and could better support residents if they were more widely promoted and consistently available. Further, access to local technical support and device repair services remains limited, with many residents citing high costs, transportation challenges, or a lack of trusted providers as ongoing barriers.

Residents also described several persistent needs. Older adults struggle with smartphones because of small screens and touch-based interfaces, signaling a need for computers and devices with larger fonts, larger displays, and more accessible operation capabilities. Participants also emphasized the

need for community computers inside housing facilities, especially for individuals without personal devices and particularly stressed the importance of these devices being of high-quality, capable of supporting essential tasks such as online learning, job applications, telehealth appointments, and staying connected with family and community.

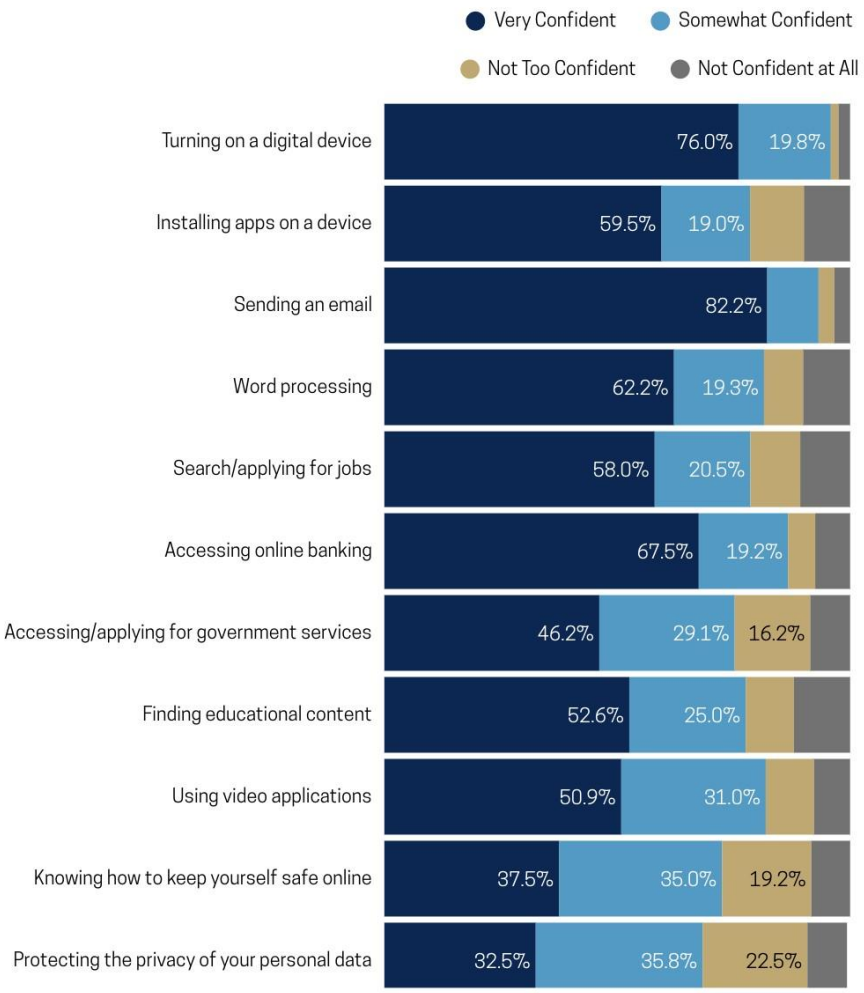
Digital Literacy

Limited digital skills and distrust in technology continue to restrict full participation in digital activities in Craven County. The Digital Opportunity Survey and community listening sessions showed that while most residents have smartphones and regularly use the internet for everyday activities, such as social media, streaming movies, watching television shows, paying bills, and basic communication, many lack confidence in using all the features on their devices or understanding how to stay safe online. Residents expressed a strong interest in building their technology skills and shared that they would attend computer and digital literacy classes if these were accessible, offered at convenient times, and held in familiar, trusted spaces such as community centers, libraries, schools, and faith-based organizations. Further residents emphasized that training should be hands-on and tailored to specific groups, such as older adults who need practical, guided support with smartphones and basic technology use.

Residents identified online safety and digital confidence as major barriers to participation. Many expressed concerns about scams, misleading advertisements, and confusing technical terms that make them hesitant to engage online. They want help recognizing fraudulent activity, protecting personal information, and understanding internet service options in clear, plain language. Creating safe, supportive spaces where residents can ask questions and practice new skills without judgment will be essential to building trust and confidence in the digital environment.

Digital Opportunity Survey data reinforce these findings. While most respondents reported feeling comfortable with basic tasks such as sending emails (93%) and turning on a device (96%), confidence declined sharply when tasks involved more advanced skills or personal information management. The lowest levels of confidence were reported in protecting the privacy of personal data (31.7% not confident or somewhat confident), keeping oneself safe online (27.5%), and accessing or applying for government services (24.8%). Moderate challenges were also identified in finding educational content online (22.4%), installing apps (21.5%), and searching or applying for jobs (21.4%).

How confident are you in your abilities for each of the following tasks?



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

While residents in Craven County demonstrate strong foundational digital skills, the findings point to ongoing challenges in cybersecurity awareness, privacy protection, and confidence using digital tools to access essential services. Addressing these gaps through targeted and sustained digital literacy initiatives in trusted, accessible community spaces will be an important next step toward increasing digital participation.

County Assets

Craven County has a strong network of assets that support residents' access to digital skills, devices, and reliable internet (*see appendix*). The Craven-Pamlico Regional Library (CPRL)

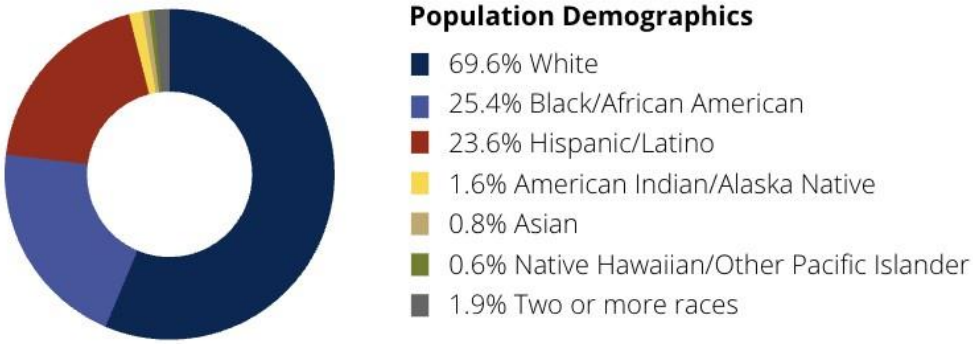
system, including branches in New Bern, Havelock, Vanceboro, and Cove City, serves as the core of this ecosystem by offering public computers, Wi-Fi, and hands-on technology assistance. The CPRL Book/Tech Mobile extends these services into rural areas, ensuring residents with limited transportation can still access digital tools. Additional access points such as Craven County Schools' NC Student Connect Park and Learn sites and Craven Community College's public Wi-Fi further expand digital opportunities for students, adult learners, and the general community.

Craven County also has targeted resources that support older adults, who often face the greatest barriers to digital participation. Craven County Senior Services provides tailored digital skills support, while a nearby community center offers discounted programs for housing authority residents based on age, creating new opportunities for seniors to learn and stay connected. The Housing Authority itself is well-positioned for future digital inclusion investment; its existing cable infrastructure offers a solid foundation to strengthen broadband access and improve affordability for households that are currently underserved.

Other community assets round out the county's digital landscape. The New Bern Riverfront Convention Center provides public Wi-Fi in a central civic space, and organizations like Peletah Ministries offer potential future partnerships for outreach and training. Together, these assets form a growing digital inclusion network that expands access to devices, connectivity, and digital skills across Craven County. Although these assets form a strong foundation, many of them remain underused. Strengthening promotion of available services, increasing community partnerships, and enhancing on-site support will be critical to helping more residents take advantage of the digital resources that already exist throughout Craven County.

Duplin County

Duplin County, located in southeastern North Carolina, is a predominantly rural county with a strong agricultural identity and deep cultural roots. Spanning approximately 822 square miles, the county is home to an estimated 49,000 residents as of 2024, resulting in a population density of around 60 persons per square mile. The county seat, Kenansville, along with towns like Wallace, Warsaw, and Beulaville, serve as centers of commerce and community life. Duplin County is a well known wine-producing county and is one of the state's leading agricultural producers, particularly in hog farming, poultry, and crop production. The county has the highest concentration of farmers in the region. It is also recognized for its multilingual and multicultural communities, including a growing population of Spanish-speaking and Haitian Creole-speaking residents due to their roles in agriculture. The county has a relatively young population but is also home to a steadily increasing number of retirees.



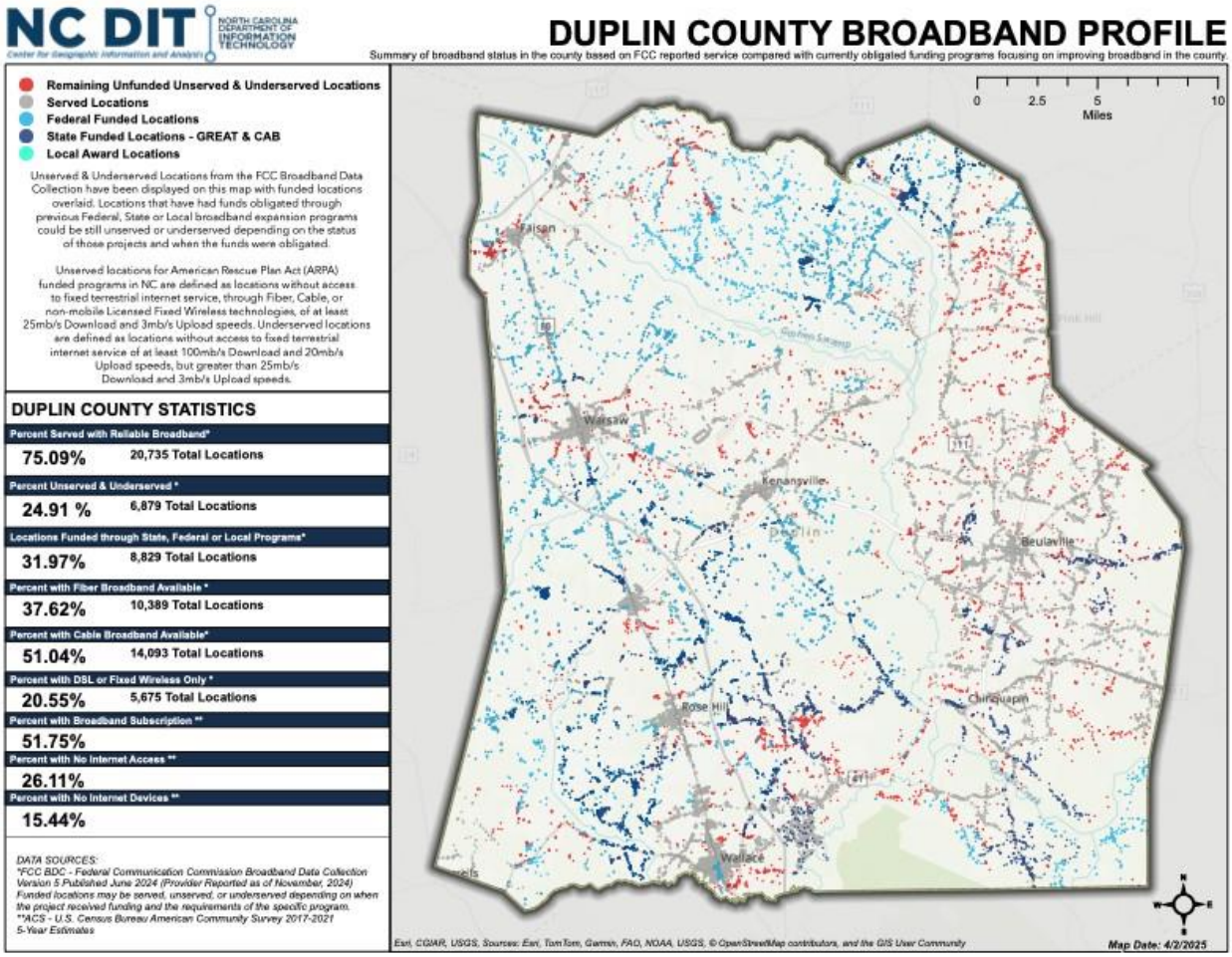
Duplin County has a diverse and predominantly rural population, with 85.33% of residents living in rural areas. About 25.74% of residents are aged 60 or older, highlighting the importance of accessible digital resources for older adults. Educational and literacy challenges are present, with 8.20% of adults facing low literacy, which is higher than many surrounding counties. Individuals

with disabilities make up 17.27% of the population, and veterans represent 7.68%, indicating the need for inclusive technology training and accessible services. Economic vulnerability is significant, with 30.02% of residents living at or below 150% of the federal poverty level and 2.16% incarcerated. Language access is also a key issue in Duplin County, as 11.17% of residents are English learners and 7% report limited English proficiency. Additionally, 30.4% of residents identify as part of an ethnic or racial minority group, underscoring the county's cultural and linguistic diversity.

Despite its agricultural strengths and cultural diversity, Duplin County faces persistent challenges in achieving digital equity. Many rural areas lack access to high-speed broadband, and where service is available, limited provider competition, affordability concerns, and gaps in digital literacy continue to restrict full participation in education, healthcare, and workforce development. These challenges are further complicated by language barriers and limited access to training or support services in some communities. The following sections provide a snapshot of Duplin County's digital inclusion landscape and outline opportunities to improve connectivity, close access gaps, and ensure digital opportunity for all residents.

Available Broadband Connectivity and Adoption

In Duplin County, 75.09% of locations have access to reliable broadband, and 24.91% are unserved or underserved. Fiber is available to 37.62% and cable to 51.04%, while 20.55% have only DSL or fixed wireless. Unfunded, unserved, and underserved areas are mostly dispersed across the county—southeast of Wallace; on the outskirts of Warsaw; west of Faison; on the outskirts of Greenevers; in the northeast of the county near the Lenoir County line; across the broad outskirts of Beulaville and Chinquapin; and southwest of Williams. The highest concentration of served locations is in more-populated areas, including Faison, Warsaw, Rose Hill, Wallace, Kenansville, Beulaville, and Magnolia.



Source: [NC OneMap]

Duplin County offers multiple wired options across fiber, cable, and DSL and currently has about 11 internet providers (*see Table 7*). Spectrum anchors service with cable to 63.7% of locations at 1,000 Mbps and a growing fiber footprint at 32.6% at 1,000 Mbps. Brightspeed provides fiber to 23.0% at 1,000 Mbps and maintains broad DSL availability to 73.0% at 37 Mbps, extending coverage where higher-capacity wired choices are limited. Additional fiber providers include Focus Broadband at 18.1% and Star Communications at 1.6%, both advertising 1,000 Mbps. Fixed-wireless further expands access to additional hard to reach areas. US Cellular covers 90.9% of locations at 22 Mbps, T-Mobile Home Internet 69.1% at 59 Mbps, and Open Broadband 50.2% at 99 Mbps. Other options include Verizon at 30.4% at 254 Mbps, Eastern Carolina Broadband at 19.8% at 100 Mbps, and smaller footprints from Earthlink and AT&T at 1.7% each at 28 Mbps. Taken together, these offerings give most households at least one path online, though some areas still rely on DSL or wireless where fiber or cable are not yet present.

Table 7: Internet Service Providers - Duplin County

Internet Service Provider	Connection	Availability	Average Download Speed
Brightspeed	Fiber	23.0%	1,000 Mbps
	DSL	73.0%	37 Mbps
Spectrum	Fiber	32.6%	1,000 Mbps
	Cable	63.7%	1,000 Mbps
Focus Broadband	Fiber	18.1%	1,000 Mbps
Star Communications	Fiber	1.6%	1,000 Mbps
Earthlink	Fixed Wireless	1.7%	28 Mbps
AT&T	Fixed Wireless	1.7%	28 Mbps
US Cellular	Fixed Wireless	90.9%	22 Mbps
T-Mobile Home Internet	Fixed Wireless	69.1%	59 Mbps
Open Broadband	Fixed Wireless	50.2%	99 Mbps
Verizon	Fixed Wireless	30.4%	254 Mbps
Eastern Carolina Broadband	Fixed Wireless	19.8%	100 Mbps

Source: ISP Reports

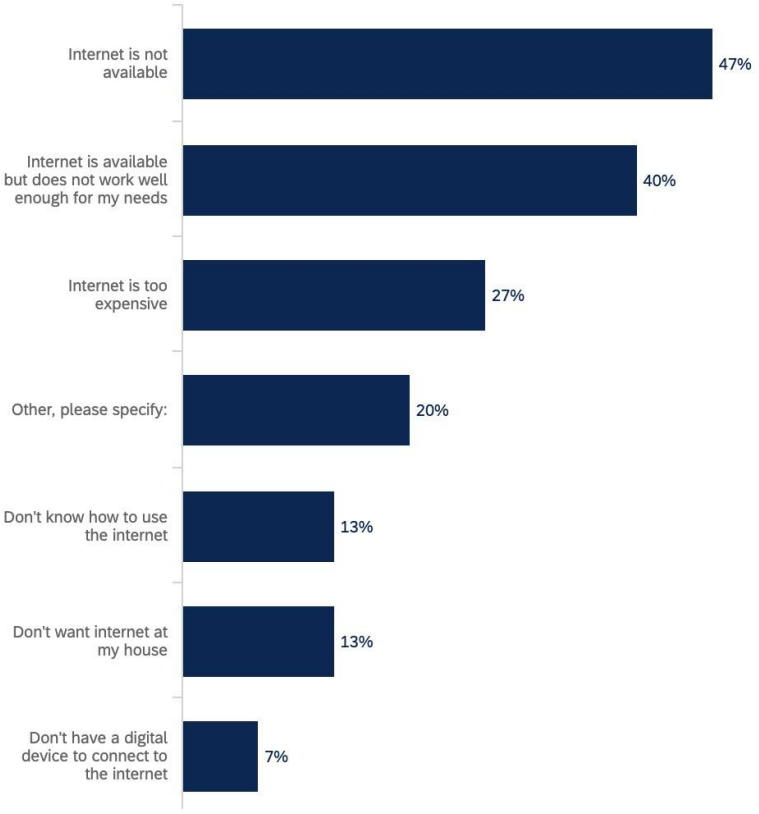
Broadband Infrastructure Investments

Duplin County has received two state-supported broadband infrastructure awards through the Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) program. These awards were granted to FOCUS Broadband and Hosted America and are intended to support the deployment of fiber-based broadband infrastructure to 1,887 households and 33 businesses in unserved and underserved areas of the county. These investments are expected to improve access in locations where high-speed wired service has been limited.

Adoption

In terms of broadband adoption, 51.75% of households maintain a broadband subscription, while 26.11% report having no internet access. Data from the Digital Opportunity Survey revealed that internet availability, reliability and costs are key factors that contribute to the relatively low broadband subscription rate in this county. At the listening session, residents called for stronger and reliable internet and more affordable internet plans. Many of the attendees are on fixed incomes and cannot afford current subscription rates.

What is preventing you from accessing the internet? (n=25)



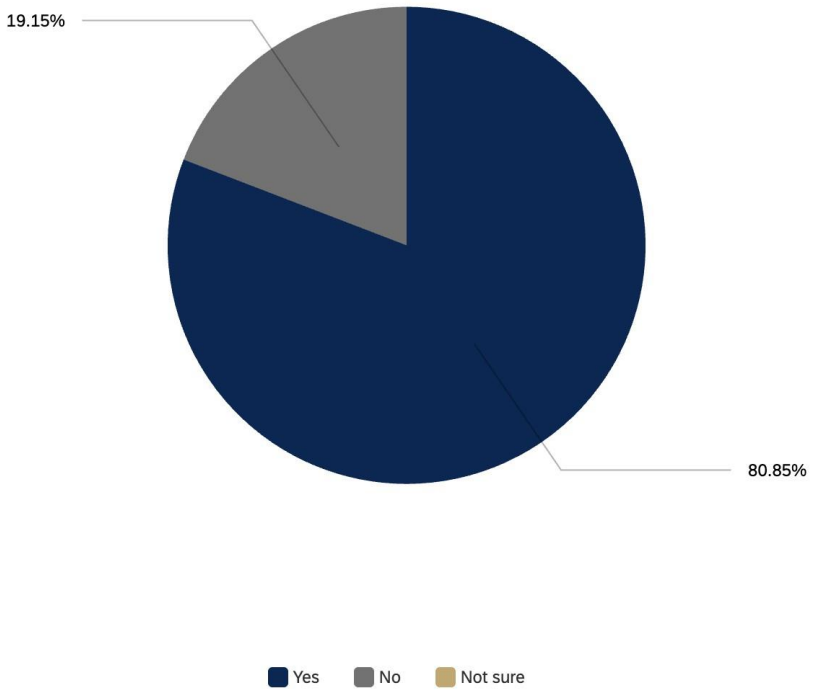
Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

Device Access

Access to reliable, functional devices remains a significant barrier to digital inclusion in Duplin County. Data from the Broadband Adoption Index show that 15.44% of households lack any computer devices, one of the highest rates in the region. This indicates that more than one in seven households are completely without a desktop, laptop, tablet, or similar device— relying solely on smartphones or lacking access altogether. Such limitations restrict residents' ability to engage in online learning, remote work, telehealth, and essential digital services.

According to the Digital Opportunity Survey, 80.85% of Duplin County respondents reported that their household has enough working digital devices (computers, smart phones, tablets) to meet everyone's needs, while 19.15% indicated not. This suggests that roughly one in five households struggle with device sufficiency, whether due to limited availability, outdated technology, or a lack of accessible devices for all family members.

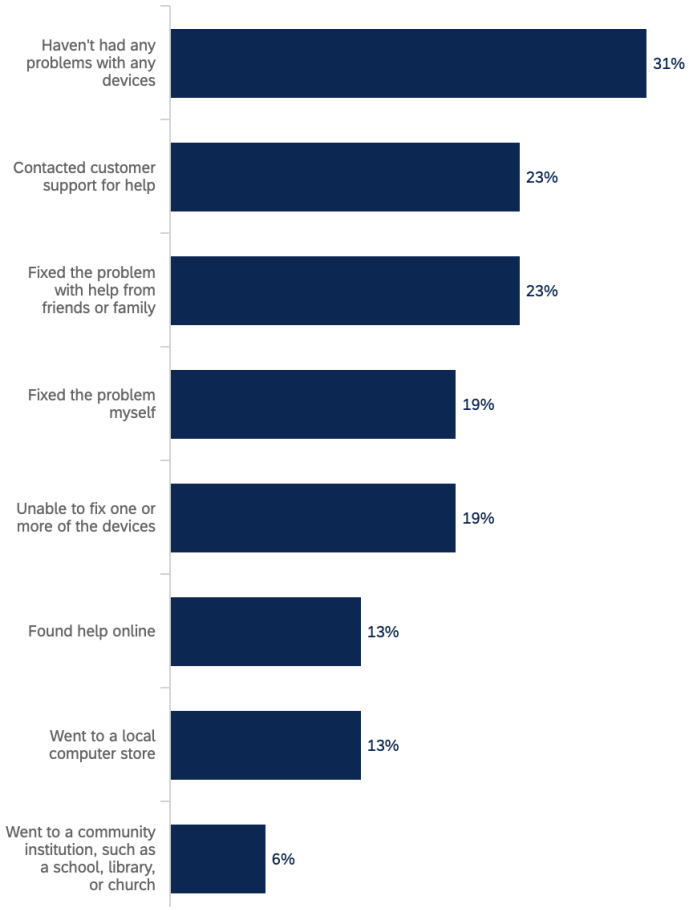
Does your household have enough working digital devices (computers, smart phones, tablets) available to meet the needs of everyone living in this home? (n=54)



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

Sixty-nine percent of survey respondents indicated that they have had problems with their device(s) in the past six months of completing the survey. Contacting customer support (23%) or relying on friends and family for assistance (23%) were cited as the most common course of action to resolve their device issues. Relatively fewer residents sought help from community institutions such as schools, libraries, or churches (6%). This indicates that there are barriers to accessing existing community resources for device troubleshooting and repair.

In the past 6 months, if one of your digital devices failed to function, broke, or stopped working properly how did you deal with the problem you encountered? (Select all that apply)



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

The listening session provided valuable local context and highlighted both resources and ongoing challenges. Many older adults in the county reported owning mobile phones, ranging from basic flip phones to smartphones, illustrating varying levels of comfort and familiarity with technology. Residents named several community resources such as the local library and senior services spaces that offer access to public computers and printers. Despite these opportunities, specific needs remain. Residents emphasized the importance of larger devices such as tablets or laptops with adjustable fonts and accessible interfaces, particularly for aging adults and individuals with disabilities. There is also a growing need for assistive technologies—including screen readers for visually impaired users and closed-caption phones for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. Participants also expressed appreciation for simplified phones like "Jitterbug" models, which feature large buttons and clear displays, but noted that such options are limited and often expensive.

To address the challenge of device access, residents called for better awareness of laptop and device donation and refurbishing programs, which could help close the device gap, especially for low-income households and seniors on fixed incomes. Regarding utilization of community spaces

for devices and repairs, there is a disconnect between available resources and resident use indicating that access alone may not be enough if services are not well-matched to residents' device needs or preferences.

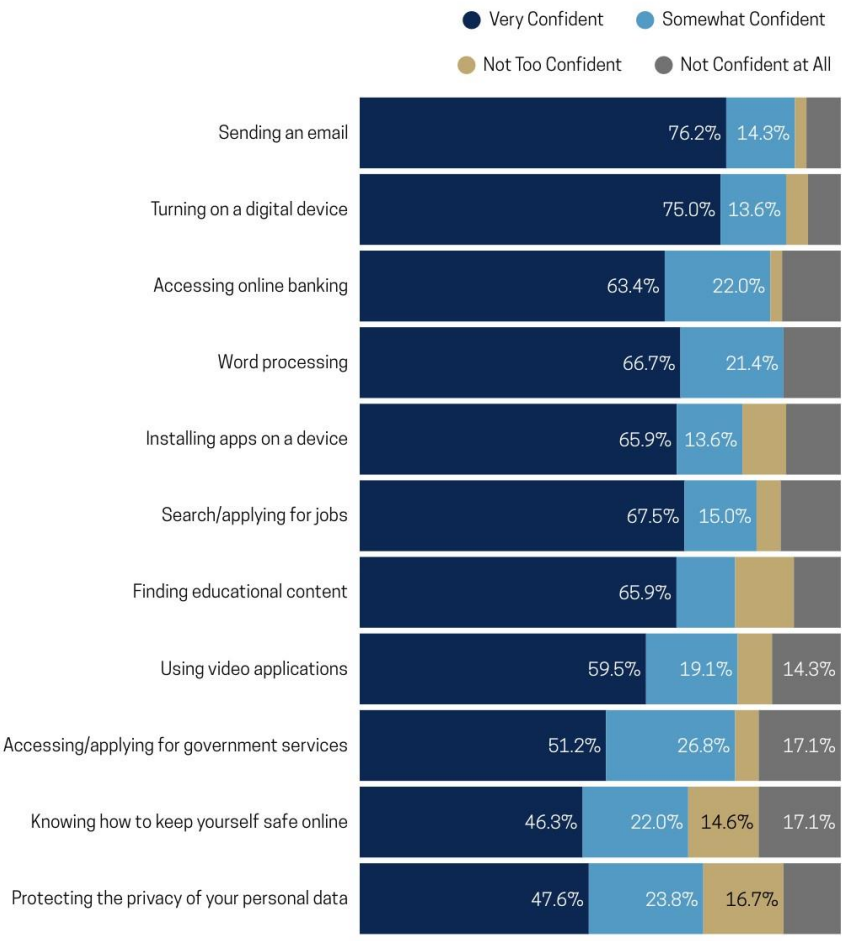
Digital Literacy

Residents of Duplin County voiced that better education about technology could reduce fear and hesitation, especially among those new to smartphones, tablets, or online services. Both listening session data and the Digital Opportunity Survey results revealed that Duplin County residents are eager to expand their digital skills but face practical challenges that limit full engagement. While digital literacy opportunities already exist through the Senior Center, local libraries, James Sprunt Community College, Digital Link and Learn (ECU), and retired educators who volunteer community support, many residents, especially those with lower digital confidence and limited mobility, need continued, hands-on assistance to feel confident using technology. Residents also emphasized that learning experiences should be accessible, recurring, and personally relevant, allowing individuals to practice skills on their own devices in comfortable, trusted settings.

Residents offered several key recommendations that would support their digital engagement and experience. They emphasized the need for mobile and in-home technical support, noting that limited transportation makes it challenging for many individuals to access help outside their homes. Participants also recommended supplementing digital classes with follow-up phone assistance to address questions that arise after training, improving the readability and usability of online applications by using larger fonts and more accessible layouts, and providing simple technology setups supported by dedicated personnel. Additionally, residents stressed the importance of empowerment strategies that help older adults and individuals with disabilities feel more confident seeking assistance.

Findings from the Digital Opportunity Survey reinforce these community insights. While most respondents felt comfortable performing basic tasks such as sending emails (90%) and turning on a device (89%), confidence declined for more complex or safety-related skills. The lowest confidence levels were reported in keeping oneself safe online (31.7% not confident or somewhat confident), protecting the privacy of personal data (28.6%), and accessing or applying for government services (21.9%). Moderate challenges were also identified in using video applications such as Zoom or FaceTime (21.4%), installing apps (20.5%), and searching or applying for jobs (17.5%).

How confident are you in your abilities for each of the following tasks?



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

County Assets

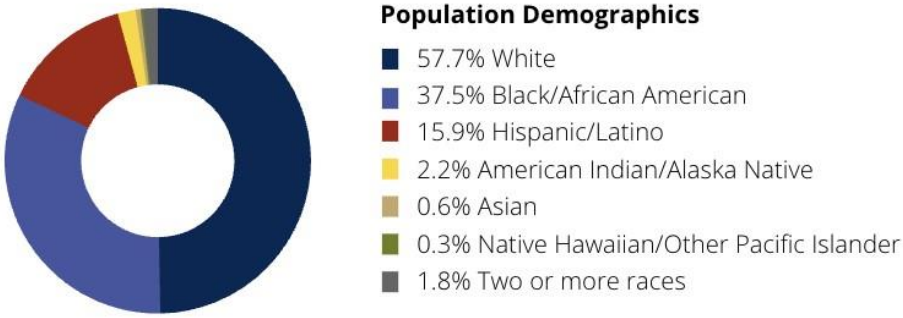
Duplin County has a broad and distributed network of assets that support digital access, skill-building, and community connectivity. Public libraries form the backbone of this system. Locations such as the Dorothy Wightman Library, Florence Gallier Library, Phillip Leff Memorial Library, Rose Hill Community Memorial Library, Warsaw-Kornegay Library, and the Faison Library and Museum offer public Wi-Fi, computer access, and community gathering spaces. These libraries create trusted environments where residents can access essential technology and receive informal support. Other public access points, including Beulaville Town Hall, the Calypso Volunteer Fire Department, the City of Magnolia, and Snow Hill Free Will Baptist Church, expand connectivity into smaller towns and rural areas. These locations help reduce geographic disparities in access and provide important stopping points for residents who may not live near a library.

Educational institutions and senior programs contribute significantly to Duplin County's digital inclusion landscape. James Sprunt Community College provides digital skills training and public computer access that support students, jobseekers, and adult learners. The University of Mount Olive Agriculture Building also offers public Wi-Fi that benefits students and community members involved in agricultural and workforce development programs. Duplin County Schools provide device access for students and families who rely on school-issued technology for coursework and educational activities. The Duplin County Senior Center offers digital skills support and public internet access that help older adults build confidence in using devices, accessing online services, and staying connected.

Additional partners strengthen device access and community outreach. The Kramden Institute supports device distribution and offers a path for residents who need an affordable computer. Community-based organizations such as the Faison Recreation and Wellness Center provide further public Wi-Fi access and serve as important hubs for families and youth.

Greene County

Greene County, located in the eastern region of North Carolina, is one of the state's smallest and most rural counties. Covering approximately 266 square miles, Greene County is home to an estimated 20,000 residents as of 2024, with a population density of about 75 persons per square mile. The county seat, Snow Hill, serves as the central hub for government, commerce, and community activity. Greene County's economy is deeply rooted in agriculture, particularly in crop production and livestock, and the county maintains a strong sense of community pride and local identity. The population includes a mix of young families, agricultural workers, and older adults.



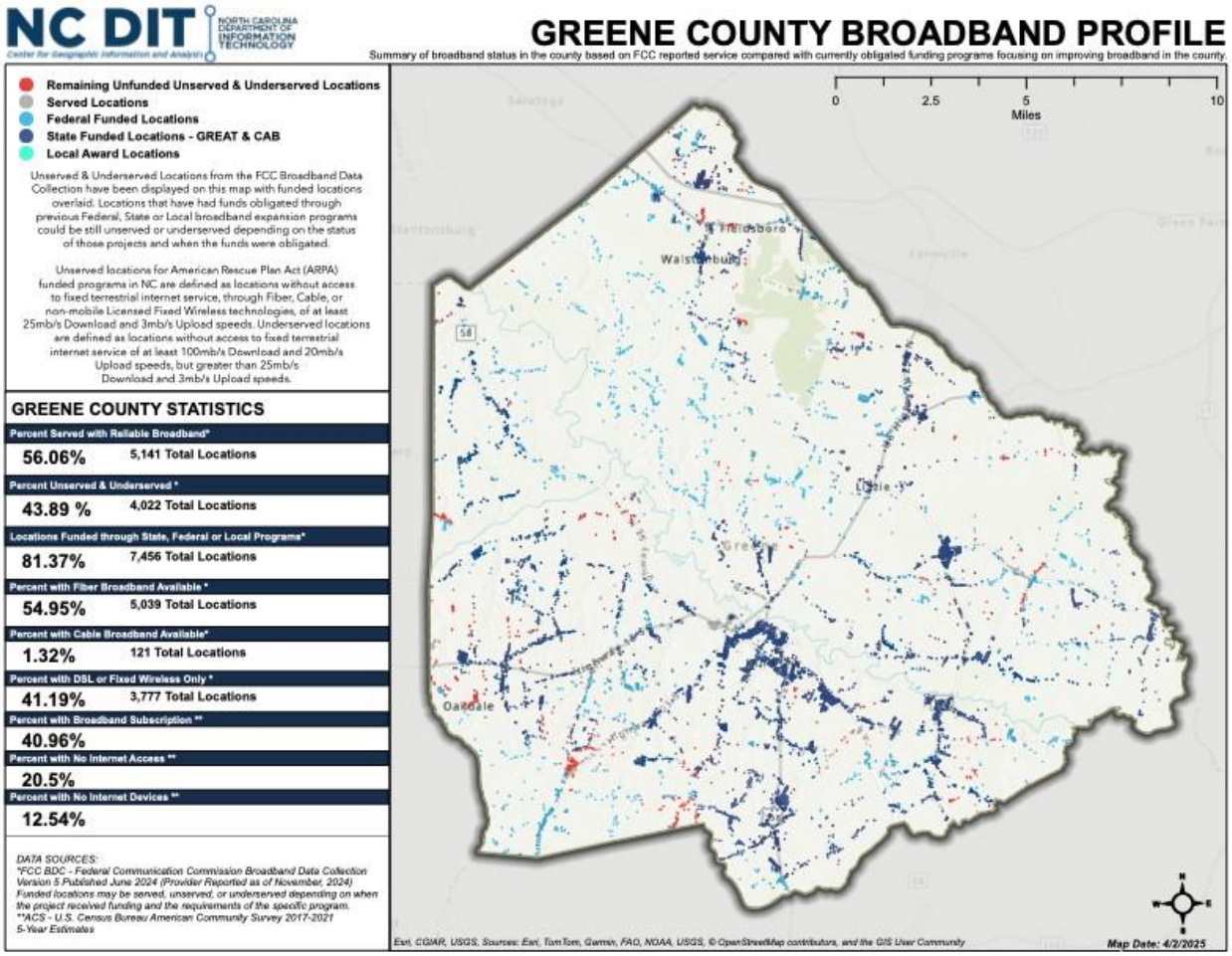
Greene County's covered populations represent a mix of demographic and socioeconomic needs that shape its digital inclusion priorities. The county is entirely rural community (100% rural) with diverse needs across its covered populations. Nearly one in four residents (23.52%) are aged 60 or older, and 9.29% of adults face low literacy challenges. Individuals with disabilities make up 19.59% of the population, and veterans account for 5.10%, highlighting the need for accessible digital tools and adaptive learning programs. Economic vulnerability is high, with 33.26% of residents living at or below 150% of the federal poverty level and 1.30% incarcerated. Language and cultural diversity also shape local access needs, as 5.56% of residents are English learners and

7% report limited English proficiency. Additionally, 42.3% of residents identify as part of an ethnic or racial minority group.

Despite its agricultural strengths and close-knit communities, Greene County faces notable challenges in achieving digital equity. Like many rural areas, the county experiences limited broadband infrastructure, especially in outlying areas, along with restricted provider options, affordability concerns, and digital literacy gaps. Many households face barriers to obtaining reliable high-speed internet, appropriate digital devices, and training resources, limiting their ability to engage fully in education, employment, healthcare, and essential digital services. The following sections provide a snapshot of Greene County's digital landscape and identify opportunities to build a more connected, inclusive digital experience for all residents.

Available Broadband Connectivity and Adoption

In Greene County, 56.06% of locations have access to reliable broadband, and 43.89% are unserved or underserved which is the lowest coverage and highest unserved/underserved share among ECC counties. Fiber is available to 54.95% and cable to 1.32%, while 41.19% have only DSL or fixed wireless. Unfunded, unserved, and underserved areas are concentrated mostly in the southwestern and northern parts of the county—around the intersection of Mewborn Church Road and NC Highway 903; south of Arba; and south of US Route 13 on the western side of the county. Concentrations of served locations are limited, with pockets in the northwestern part of Snow Hill, north of Walstonburg, Hookerton, and southwest of Hookerton.



Source: NC OneMap

Greene County has a mix of fiber, DSL, and very limited cable service (*see Table 8*). Although approximately nine service providers have some presence in the county, the county is primarily served by two providers—Infinity Link and Brightspeed. During listening sessions, Infinity Link was praised for its service quality, but it is not fully available to residents. Infinity Link's fiber network reaches 75.6% of locations at 10,000 Mbps, making it the primary high-speed option. Brightspeed provides fiber to 22.2% at 1,000 Mbps and also offers wide DSL availability to 92.8% at 100 Mbps. Cable availability is small in scale: Infinity Link at 3.9% (1,000 Mbps), Spectrum at 1.5% (1,000 Mbps) plus a 1.4% fiber presence, and small cable coverage from Mediacom (1.2%) and Optimum (1.2%, 940 Mbps). Fixed-wireless extends service across much of the county. US Cellular covers 92.7% at 24 Mbps, T-Mobile Home Internet 86.5% at 55 Mbps, Open Broadband 57.9% at 100 Mbps, and Verizon 49.2% at 160 Mbps. Overall, most households have at least one way to get online, with Infinity Link's fiber providing the highest capacity where available and fixed-wireless helping in areas with little or no cable.

Table 8: Internet Service Providers - Greene County

Internet Service Provider	Connection	Availability	Average Download Speed
Brightspeed	Fiber	22.2%	1,000 Mbps
	DSL	92.8%	100 Mbps
Infinity Link	Fiber	75.6%	10,000 Mbps
	Cable	3.9%	1,000 Mbps
Spectrum	Fiber	1.4%	1,000 Mbps
	Cable	1.5%	1,000 Mbps
Mediacom	Cable	1.2%	1,000 Mbps
Optimum	Cable	1.2%	940 Mbps
US Cellular	Fixed Wireless	92.7%	24 Mbps
T-Mobile Home Internet	Fixed Wireless	86.5%	55 Mbps
Open Broadband	Fixed Wireless	57.9%	100 Mbps
Verizon	Fixed Wireless	49.2%	160 Mbps

Source: ISP Reports

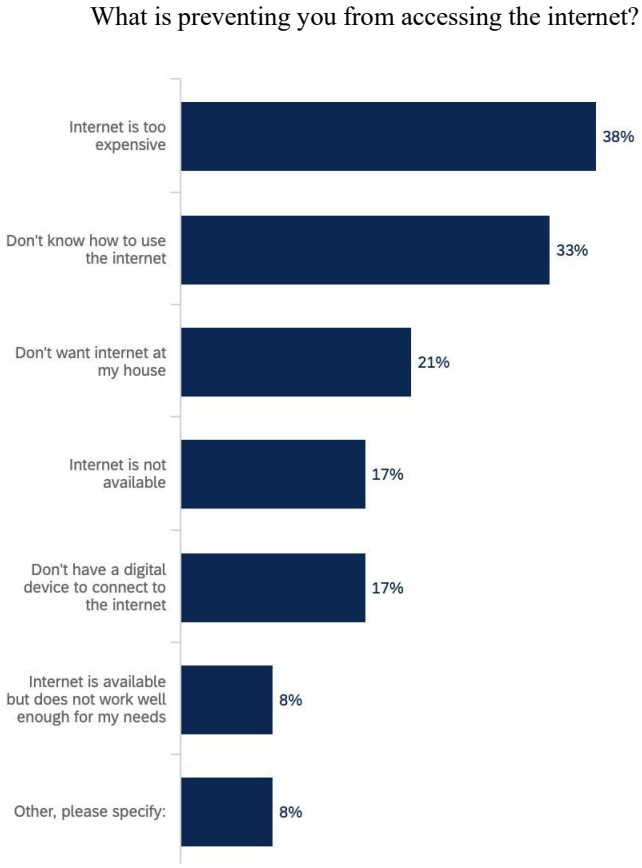
Listening sessions in Greene County point to a clear broadband access divide within the county itself. Towns such as Snow Hill and Hookerton report comparatively better connectivity, while many rural communities remain severely underserved with limited choices and inconsistent speeds. Residents and community partners emphasized three priorities: build out robust digital infrastructure to reach rural homes and businesses; adopt cost-effective pricing and construction approaches to extend service lines beyond town centers; and expand the number of service providers so competition can improve plan options and reduce costs for residents.

Broadband Infrastructure Investments

Greene County has received three state-supported broadband infrastructure awards through the Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) and Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) programs. These include two GREAT awards granted to Brightspeed and InfinityLink Communications, as well as one CAB award granted to Brightspeed. Collectively, these investments are intended to support the deployment of fiber-based broadband infrastructure to 4,257 households and 308 businesses in unserved and underserved areas of the county.

Adoption

In terms of adoption, 40.96% of households maintain a broadband subscription, the lowest rate among ECC counties, and 20.5% report no internet access. Based on survey data, persons who do not have broadband subscriptions pointed to high costs of services (38%), low confidence around using the internet (33%), and lack of interest in the service(21) as primary barriers to adoption. The average monthly cost respondents considered affordable was $52. Residents also emphasized a preference for trusted providers that are visibly committed to affordable plans and clear, customer-friendly practices (e.g., transparent pricing, straightforward enrollment, and local support).



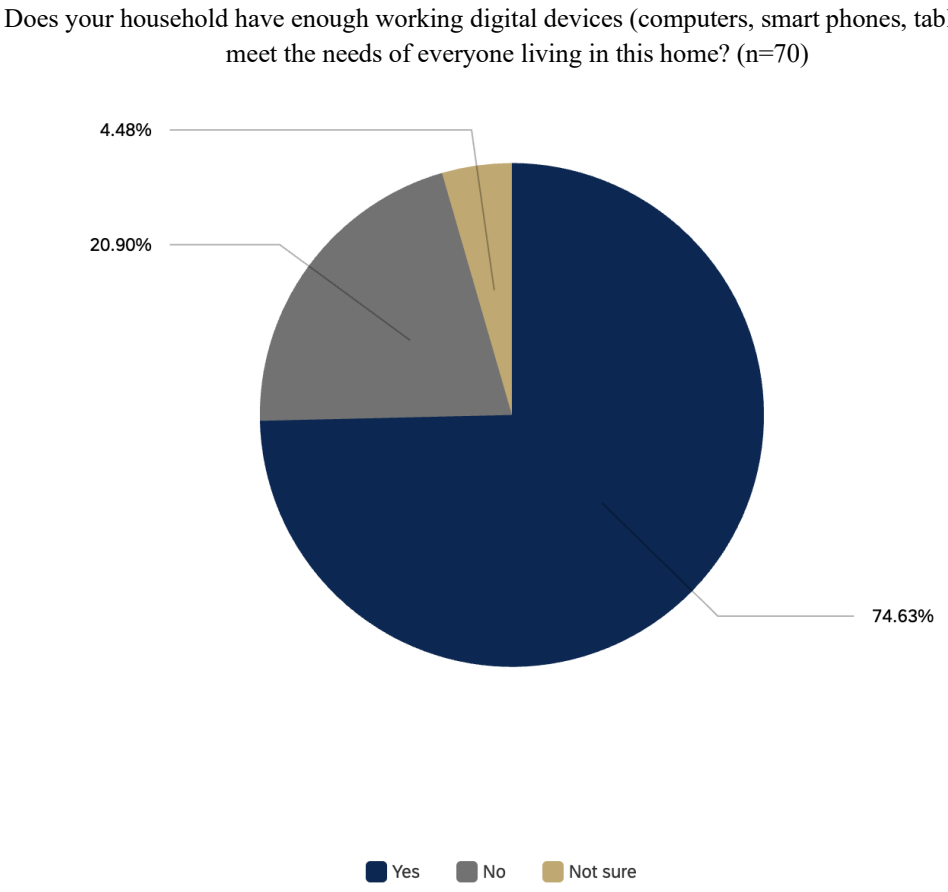
Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

Device Access

Device access remains a significant challenge for many residents in Greene County, particularly for those who rely primarily on smartphones or older computers to stay connected. Data from the Broadband Adoption Index indicate that 12.54% of households lack any computer devices, meaning that more than one in ten households are entirely without a desktop, laptop, or tablet. This

gap limits residents' ability to participate fully in online learning, telehealth, and employment opportunities that often require larger or more capable devices.

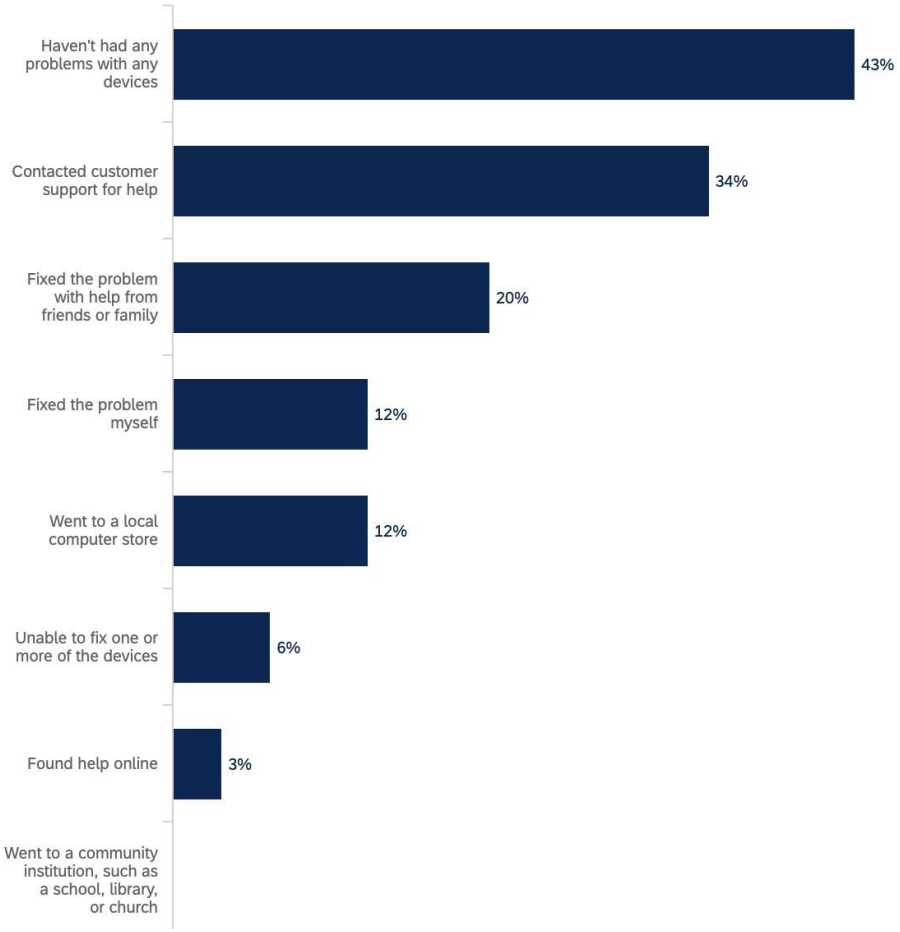
Digital Opportunity Survey results show that 74.63% of Greene County respondents felt they had sufficient working digital devices (smartphones, computers, tablets) for all household members, whereas 20.90% reported insufficient access and 4.48% were uncertain. These figures suggest that approximately one in four households experience device shortages or rely on shared or outdated technology.



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

Fifty-seven percent of respondents reported having problems with their devices within six months of completing the survey. These individuals most commonly opted to contact customer support or turned to friends and family for help. Notably, no one reported going to a community institution such as a library, school, or church for assistance. This suggests that while some local institutions offer public devices, many residents may not be aware of or comfortable accessing those supports.

In the past 6 months, if one of your digital devices failed to function, broke, or stopped working properly how did you deal with the problem you encountered? (Select all that apply)



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

The listening session provided a more detailed picture of how Greene County residents access and use digital devices. Most participants reported owning smartphones, which serve as their primary means of connecting to the internet. For many, phones are considered important tools for communication and daily activities. Several participants also owned tablets, often using them for games or entertainment and noting that tablets are easier to see and navigate than phones, especially for older adults. A small number of residents reported having desktop or laptop computers, though these devices were often outdated. For example, one participant still uses a 2008 desktop computer for typing church documents and playing games.

A few participants shared examples of efforts to increase device access. Some residents use or have used library computers and loaned hotspots, though not all continue to rely on these resources. Others mentioned programs that once offered free tablets or phones with internet access, but these initiatives were later discontinued or residents were deemed ineligible, leaving them without the

promised devices. Residents also described specific device access gaps and barriers. Many households, especially those of older adults, expressed a need for larger devices such as laptops or iPads with bigger screens and adjustable fonts, as small phone screens are difficult to see and use for extended periods.

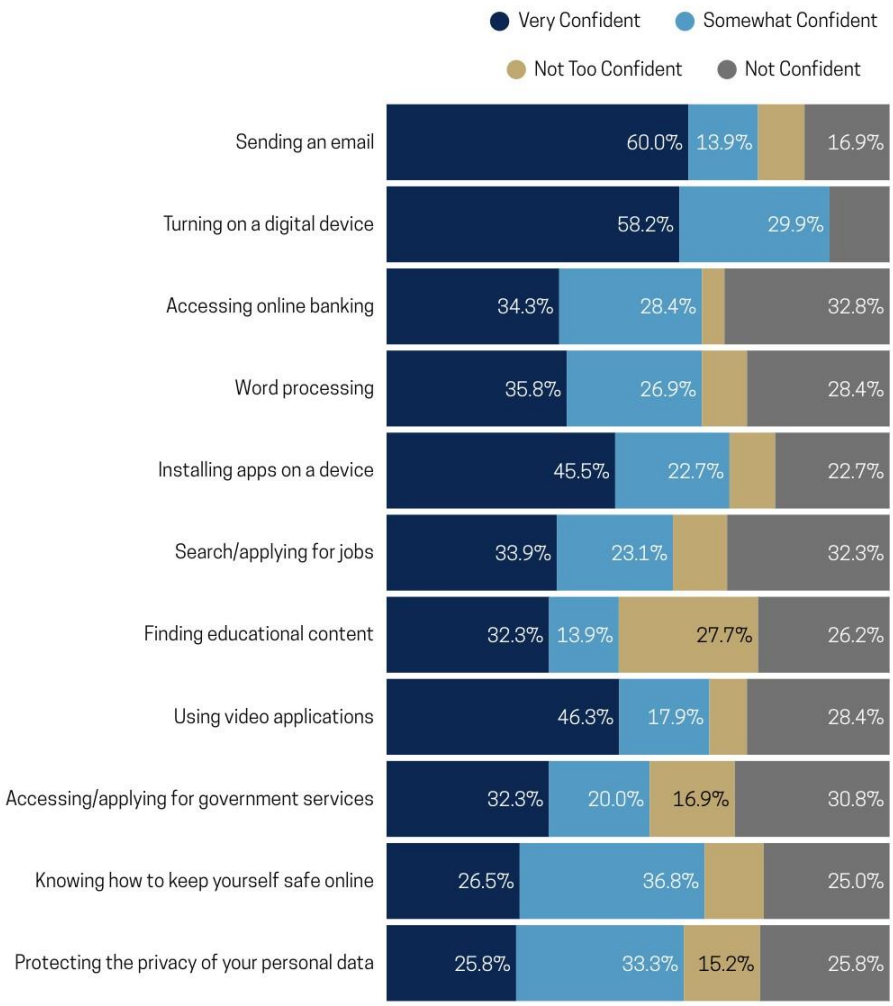
Digital Literacy

The listening session and the Digital Opportunity Survey revealed that Greene County residents are interested in building their digital skills but face barriers that limit full engagement in the digital world. While opportunities such as computer classes and access to public Wi-Fi and computers at local libraries are available, many residents, particularly beginners, find that these offerings do not fully meet their needs. Participants emphasized that they need safe, supportive, and beginner-friendly spaces to explore technology at their own pace, with one-on-one guidance and opportunities to ask questions without judgment.

Residents expressed a strong desire for tailored, hands-on instruction that focuses on building foundational skills and confidence. They recommended creating small-group or individual training sessions designed for true beginners, supported by a regional digital navigator who could provide ongoing assistance and advocacy. Participants also highlighted the importance of developing community partnerships among libraries, schools, nonprofits, and local agencies to expand outreach and ensure consistent access to digital skills support across the county.

Findings from the Digital Opportunity Survey reinforce these community insights. While most respondents reported feeling comfortable performing basic tasks such as turning on a device (88%) and sending emails (74%), confidence declined sharply for more complex or security-related skills. The lowest levels of confidence were reported in accessing online banking (37.3% not confident or somewhat confident), finding educational content online (46.1%), and searching or applying for jobs (43.1%). Residents also reported low confidence in accessing or applying for government services (47.7%), protecting the privacy of personal data (40.9%), and using video applications such as Zoom or FaceTime (35.8%).

How confident are you in your abilities for each of the following tasks?



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

County Assets

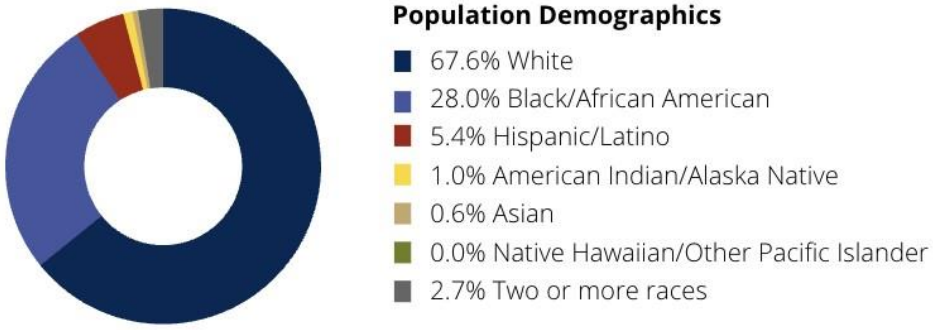
Greene County has a small but meaningful set of digital inclusion assets that offer residents opportunities to access the internet, participate in digital learning, and receive targeted technology support. The Greene County Library serves as a key anchor institution by providing both digital skills assistance and access to public computers and Wi-Fi. As one of the few community spaces offering free and open technology resources, the library plays an important role in supporting residents who need connectivity for schoolwork, job searches, online services, and everyday communication. The Greene County Senior Center further strengthens this support by offering

public internet access and digital skills help that specifically address the needs of older adults who often face barriers to using devices and navigating online platforms.

Education and workforce partners add additional capacity to the county's digital landscape. Lenoir Community College provides digital skills training that benefits students, adult learners, and jobseekers who rely on technology to access coursework, career development tools, and online learning platforms. Training and skill-building at the college support long-term workforce readiness and help residents strengthen the competencies needed to participate fully in an increasingly digital economy. The Maury Correctional Institution also offers digital skills training, which supports reentry preparation by helping individuals build technology confidence and familiarity with online tools they will need upon returning to the community.

Jones County

Jones County, located in Eastern North Carolina, is a small, rural county characterized by its expansive forests, agricultural lands, and small, close-knit communities. Covering approximately 473 square miles, the county is home to just over 9,000 residents as of 2024, making it one of the least populous counties in the state. With a population density of around 19 persons per square mile, Jones County is defined by its rural landscape, natural resources, and strong agricultural economy, particularly in timber and crop production. The county seat, Trenton, along with other small communities such as Pollocksville and Maysville, form the core of civic and community life in the area.



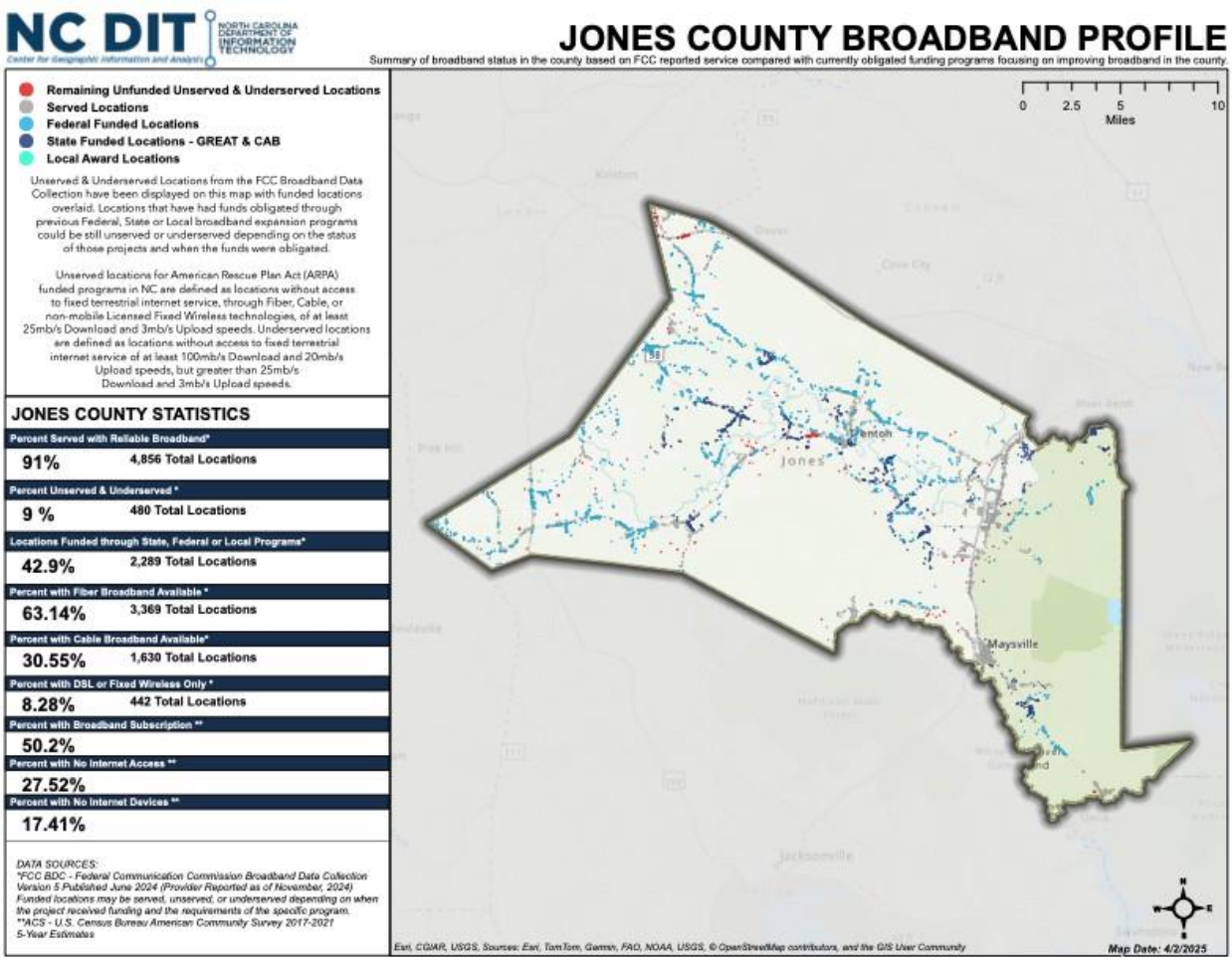
Jones County is a fully rural county (100% rural) with a population that faces several economic and accessibility challenges. Nearly one-third of residents (31.81%) are aged 60 or older, reflecting an aging population that may require additional digital literacy and access support. Educational and literacy challenges are notable, with 4.48% of adults experiencing low literacy. Individuals with disabilities make up 21.82% of the population, and veterans represent 12.09%, emphasizing the importance of accessible digital tools and inclusive technology initiatives. Economic need is widespread, with 33.80% of residents living at or below 150% of the federal poverty level and 1.43% incarcerated. Language barriers are less common, with 0.72% identified as English learners and 7% reporting limited English proficiency. Additionally, 32.4% of residents identify as part of

an ethnic or racial minority group.

Despite its agricultural assets and tight-knit communities, Jones County faces substantial challenges in advancing digital equity. Many areas of the county remain unserved or underserved by broadband infrastructure, and residents often face limited provider options, affordability barriers, and digital literacy gaps. These challenges restrict full access to education, healthcare, employment, and essential online services. Addressing these digital divides is critical to supporting long-term resilience and opportunity for all residents. The following sections explore Jones County's digital landscape and outline actionable strategies for creating a more connected and inclusive future.

Available Broadband Connectivity and Adoption

In Jones County, 91% of locations have access to reliable broadband, and 9% are unserved or underserved. Fiber is available to 63.14% of locations and cable to 30.55%, while 8.28% have only DSL or fixed wireless. Unfunded, unserved, and underserved areas are concentrated in the northern part of the county and west of Trenton. Served locations cluster in more-populated areas such as Maysville, Trenton, Pollocksville, and Comfort, including corridors along US Highway 17 and in some areas along White Oak River Road.



Source: NC OneMap

Jones County is served by approximately nine broadband service providers that offer several wired options (*see Table 9*). Spectrum fiber reaches 73.7% of locations at 1,000 Mbps and Spectrum cable covers 32.8% at 1,000 Mbps. Brightspeed provides fiber to 3.0% at 973 Mbps and maintains wide DSL availability to 92.4% at 47 Mbps, which helps in areas without higher-capacity service. Optimum has a small cable presence at 4.8% at 940 Mbps, and MetroNet adds a limited fiber presence at 2.7% at 5,120 Mbps. Fixed-wireless expands access across the county. US Cellular covers 83.2% of locations at 18 Mbps, Eastern Carolina Broadband 52.2% at 100 Mbps, T-Mobile Home Internet 49.9% at 62 Mbps, Verizon 46.3% at 121 Mbps, and Open Broadband 1.9% at 25 Mbps. Overall, most households have at least one path online, though some areas still depend on DSL or wireless where fiber or cable choices are limited.

Table 9: Internet Service Providers - Jones County

Internet Service Provider	Connection	Availability	Average Download Speed
Brightspeed	Fiber	3.0%	973 Mbps
	DSL	92.4%	47 Mbps
Spectrum	Fiber	73.7%	1,000 Mbps
	Cable	32.8%	1,000 Mbps
Optimum	Cable	4.8%	940 Mbps
MetroNet	Fiber	2.7%	5,120 Mbps
US Cellular	Fixed Wireless	83.2%	18 Mbps
Eastern Carolina Broadband	Fixed Wireless	52.2%	100 Mbps
T-Mobile Home Internet	Fixed Wireless	49.9%	62 Mbps
Verizon	Fixed Wireless	46.3%	121 Mbps
Open Broadband	Fixed Wireless	1.9%	25 Mbps

Source: ISP Reports

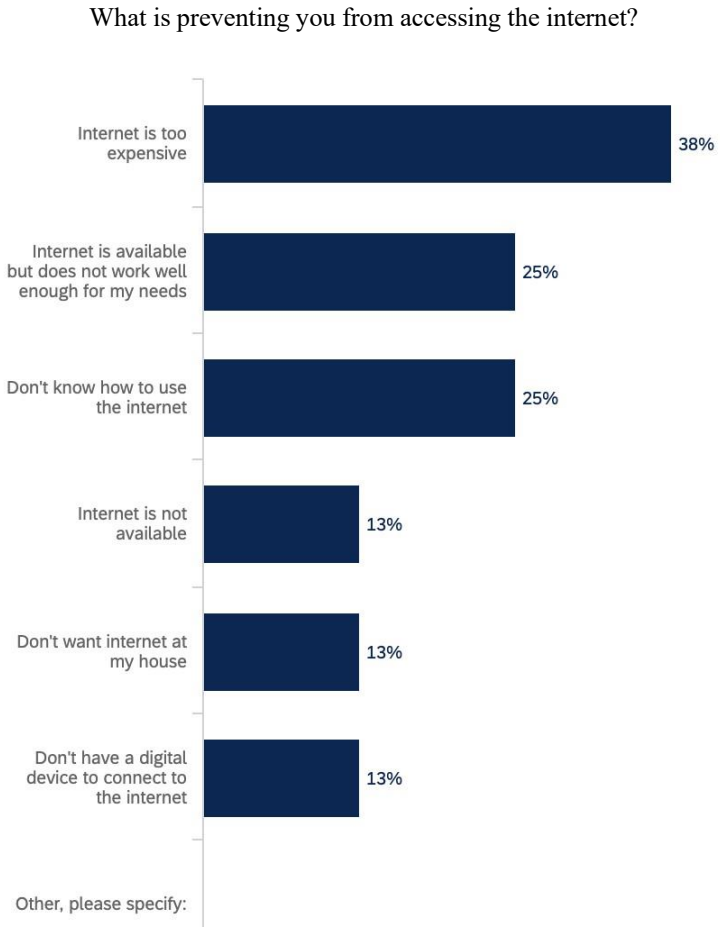
Broadband Infrastructure Investments

Jones County has received three state-supported broadband infrastructure awards through the Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) and Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) programs. These include one GREAT award granted to Spectrum and two CAB awards granted to Brightspeed. Collectively, these investments are intended to support the

deployment of fiber-based broadband infrastructure to 812 households and 33 businesses in unserved and underserved areas of the county.

Adoption

In terms of broadband adoption, 50.2% of households maintain a broadband subscription, and 27.52% report no internet access, the highest share without internet among ECC counties. Data from the Digital Opportunity Survey cites affordability, reliability of service and limited knowledge about the use of the internet as the top three barriers to not having an internet subscription in their homes. An affordable cost for home internet was estimated at a monthly cost average of $66. Findings from the listening session in Jones County aligned with this data, as only a small number of participants reported having internet at home (10 out of 38 attendees reported having an internet subscription) and many shared that monthly costs ranging from $100–$150 were unaffordable, leading some to discontinue service once children left school. Other non-subscribers described negative past service experiences, including paying for service that was never delivered, while some chose not to subscribe due to limited digital skills, lack of perceived need for the service, or fear of online scams.



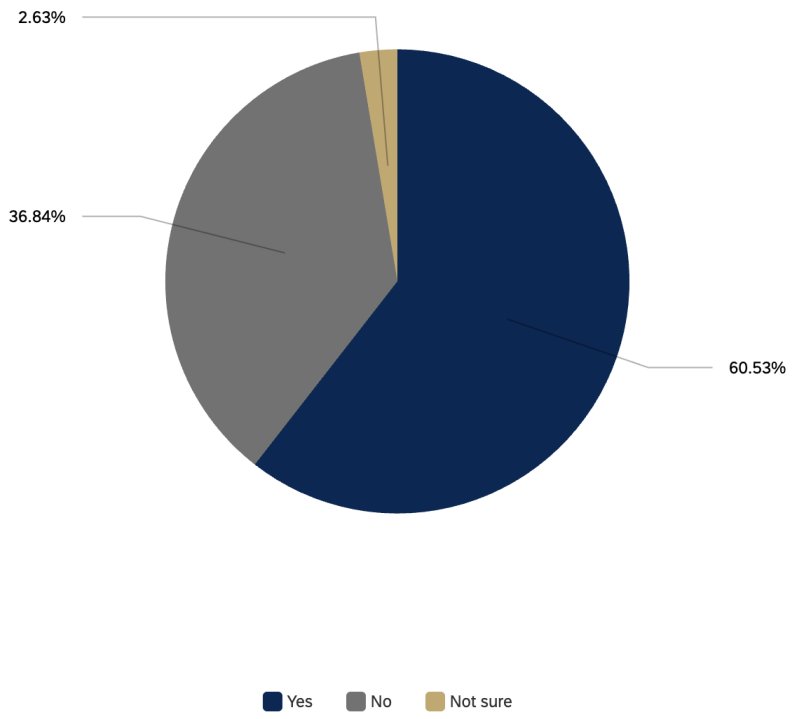
Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

Device Access

Device access remains a significant barrier for many residents in Jones County, particularly older adults and households with limited resources. Data from the Broadband Adoption Index show that 17.41 percent of households have no computer devices, the highest share in the region. This gap restricts opportunities for residents to engage in online learning, telehealth, job searches, and other essential digital services that increasingly require more than a basic mobile phone.

Results from the North Carolina Digital Opportunity Survey reflect similar challenges. Only 60.53 percent of respondents reported having enough working devices to meet everyone's needs, while 36.84 percent reported that their household did not have enough, and 2.63 percent were unsure. These findings indicate that many households rely on limited, shared, or outdated devices. The difference between the Broadband Adoption Index and survey results suggests that owning a device does not guarantee that it is functional or adequate for daily use.

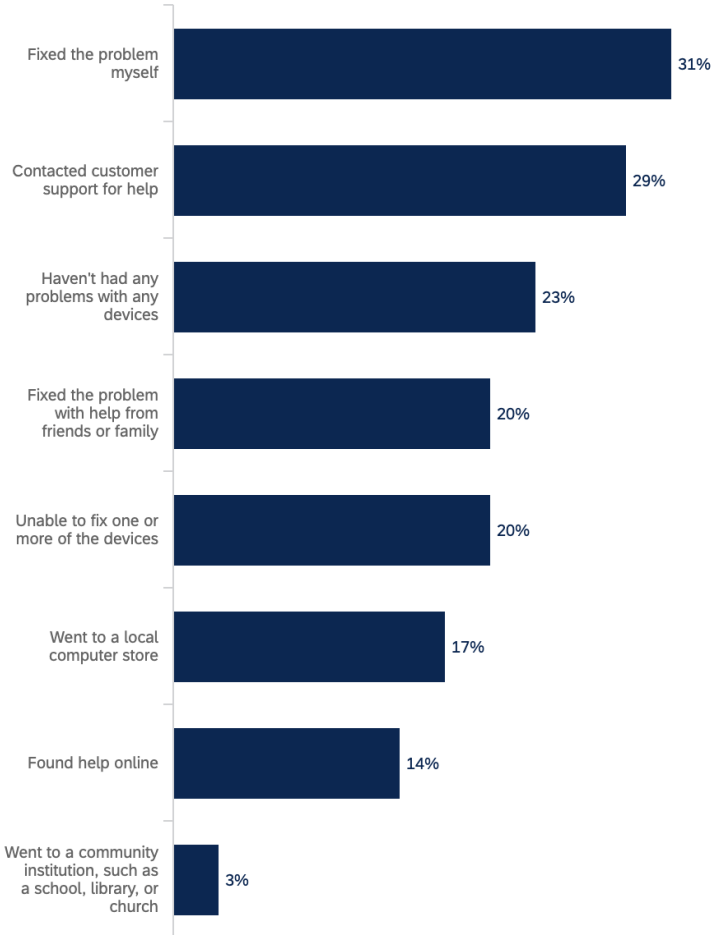
Does your household have enough working digital devices (computers, smart phones, tablets) available to meet the needs of everyone living in this home? (n=38)



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

Device reliability also presents difficulties. Seventy-seven percent of respondents reported experiencing problems with their devices within the six months prior to completing the survey. When issues arose, residents most often fixed the problem themselves (31%), contacted customer support (29%), or turned to friends and family for help (20%). Only a small share sought assistance from community institutions such as libraries, schools, or churches. This pattern points to the need for more awareness of local opportunities for device support and training.

In the past 6 months, if one of your digital devices failed to function, broke, or stopped working properly how did you deal with the problem you encountered? (Select all that apply)



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

Listening sessions provided deeper insight into how limited device access affects everyday life. Many community members, especially seniors, reported very limited access to modern digital devices. Some older adults still rely on landline phones rather than smartphones or computers, while others own outdated equipment they no longer use. Several residents explained that they

stopped using the internet altogether once their children moved out and took their devices with them. Seniors expressed a strong interest in having their own personal devices paired with instruction and ongoing support so they can build confidence as technology becomes more integrated into essential services.

The lack of adequate devices limits residents' ability to participate in online church services, communicate with family and neighbors, engage in online learning or training, and access telehealth appointments. Community members also noted that the public library provides valuable computer access, but limited hours make it difficult for some residents, particularly seniors and working families, to rely on these services consistently.

Digital Literacy

Listening sessions and the Digital Opportunity Survey revealed that Jones County residents have digital literacy needs across all age groups, with challenges most pronounced among older adults. Many seniors reported limited internet knowledge, difficulty navigating devices, and trouble completing basic tasks such as texting, using email, or managing passwords. These challenges often contribute to hesitancy in engaging with online platforms or managing digital accounts. Several younger and middle-aged residents also described gaps in foundational digital skills, showing that digital literacy needs extend beyond older populations.

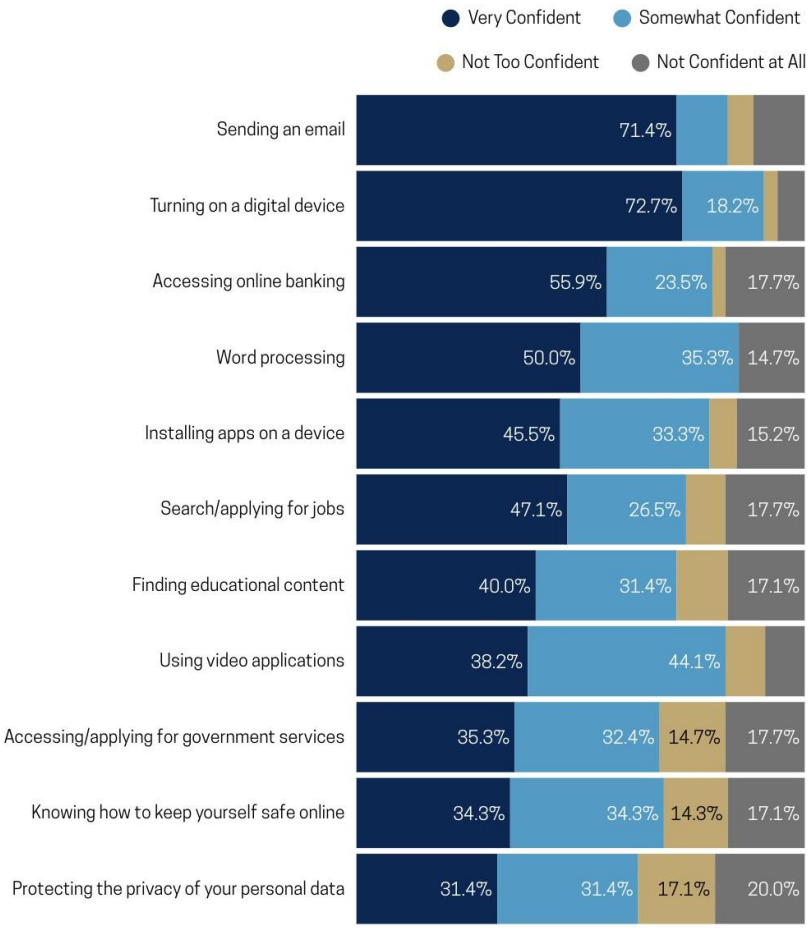
Participants emphasized the importance of tiered digital training opportunities, including basic, intermediate, and proficient levels, to reflect the diverse skill sets across the county. Fear of scams, mistrust of online platforms, and low confidence in navigating digital environments were common concerns among residents of all ages. Participants expressed a strong preference for hands-on, in-person instruction provided by trusted local trainers rather than remote or written materials. This supports community interest in a train-the-trainer model, where skilled residents help others build digital confidence through familiar and supportive relationships.

Residents also stressed the need for greater awareness of available digital training opportunities and programs that connect skill-building with access to devices. Many recognized that without a reliable computer or tablet, participation in online learning, telehealth, and digital communication remains limited. Together, these insights highlight the need for community-centered, trusted, and ongoing digital literacy programs designed to meet residents where they are and build lasting confidence in technology use.

Findings from the Digital Opportunity Survey reinforce these themes. Most respondents felt comfortable performing basic tasks such as turning on a device (73%) and sending emails (71%), but confidence decreased significantly when tasks required more advanced skills or personal information management. The lowest confidence was reported in protecting the privacy of personal data (37% - not confident or somewhat confident), keeping oneself safe online (31%),

and accessing or applying for government services (32 %). Moderate challenges were also identified in finding educational content online (29 percent), installing apps (29 percent), and searching or applying for jobs (27 percent).

How confident are you in your abilities for each of the following tasks?



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

County Assets

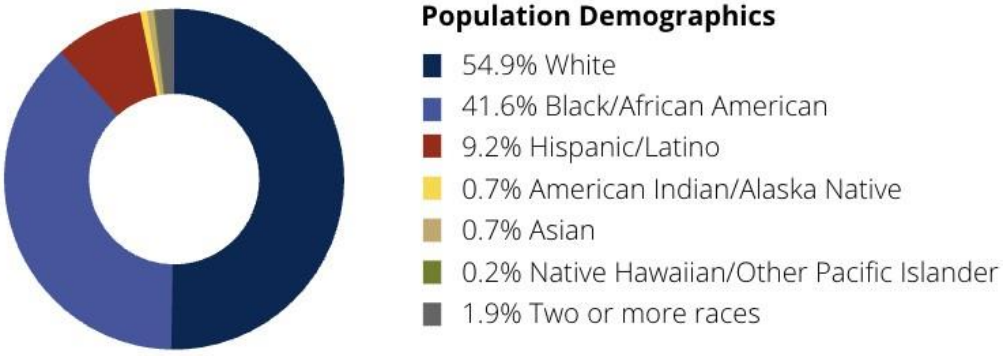
Jones County has several key assets that provide residents with access to the internet, computers, and technology support. The county is part of the Neuse Regional Library System based in Lenoir County, which includes branches in Trenton, Pollocksville, Maysville, and Comfort. These branches are open for limited hours during the week and offer public computer and Wi-Fi access, giving residents reliable locations to complete schoolwork, job applications, communication, and other online activities. The Jones County Senior Center in Trenton also provides digital skills help and public internet access for older adults, which is further supported by congregate meal sites in Pollocksville and Comfort that offer Wi-Fi and limited computer use.

Educational and workforce partners add additional support for digital access in the county. Lenoir Community College offers digital skills instruction that helps residents build technology confidence and prepare for education and workforce needs. The North Carolina State Extension Office in Trenton serves as an important resource for the agricultural community by providing computers and internet access for farmers who must complete online forms, trainings, and reporting requirements. These institutions contribute to a set of reliable and trusted locations where residents can access devices and internet service for essential tasks.

Jones County also benefits from informal support systems and untapped opportunities for training. Many residents rely on family members, neighbors, or church members for help with online activities, which shows the strength of local community networks. There is some existing capacity for digital skills instruction at the Senior Center and at the Extension Office for designated groups and the Filling Station in Pollocksville. Additional opportunities exist through potential community training venues such as local schools, community centers, and churches. Increasing awareness of available services and expanding training into familiar and accessible locations will help more residents take advantage of the digital resources already available throughout Jones County.

Lenoir County

Lenoir County, located in eastern North Carolina, is a largely rural county with a strong agricultural heritage and a growing emphasis on manufacturing, healthcare, and education. The county seat, Kinston, serves as the primary urban center and cultural hub. As of 2024, Lenoir County had a population of approximately 55,000 residents spread across 400 square miles, resulting in a population density of about 137 persons per square mile. The area is characterized by a mix of small towns, farmland, and historic neighborhoods, with key economic drivers including farming, food processing, education, and regional health services. In addition, the North Carolina Global TransPark, a major multi-modal industrial and logistics hub, is anchored in the county and represents a growing focus on aerospace, manufacturing, and logistics opportunities.



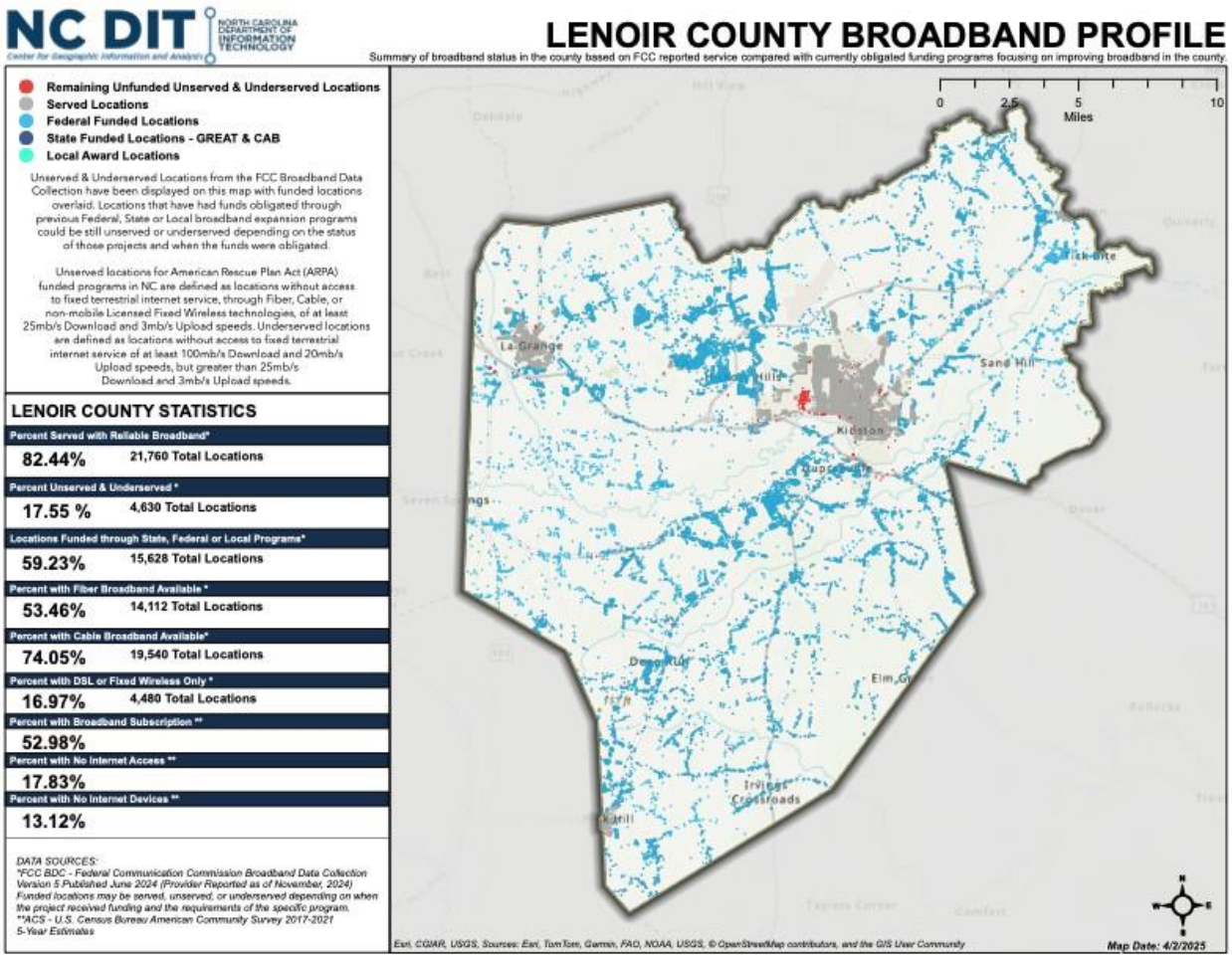
Lenoir County has a diverse population with several groups that face barriers to full digital participation. Nearly one-third of residents (28.82%) are aged 60 or older, reflecting a sizable aging population. Educational and literacy challenges are present, with 5.52% of adults experiencing low literacy. Individuals with disabilities make up 23.04% of the population, and veterans represent 8.78%, underscoring the importance of accessible technologies and training. Economic vulnerability is a major concern, as 37.25% of residents live at or below 150% of the federal poverty level, and 1.70% are incarcerated. The county is partly rural (43.84%), which can affect broadband access and affordability. Language diversity adds another layer of need as 2.87% of

residents are English learners and 7% report limited English proficiency. In addition, 45.10% of residents identify as part of an ethnic or racial minority group, highlighting the county's cultural diversity.

Despite its deep roots in agriculture and its role as a regional hub for healthcare, education, and business, Lenoir County continues to face ongoing challenges in achieving digital equity. As residents of all ages increasingly rely on the internet for learning, employment, telehealth, and staying connected, gaps in broadband access, internet adoption, device availability, digital literacy, and affordability continue to impact the community. Many rural areas still lack adequate broadband infrastructure, while low-income households face barriers to both connectivity and access to technology. These challenges limit full participation in the digital economy and deepen existing disparities. Addressing them is essential to ensure that all Lenoir County residents, regardless of age, income, or location, can access and benefit from the opportunities of a connected world. The following sections provide a snapshot of the county's digital landscape and identify opportunities to foster inclusive and equitable digital growth.

Available Broadband Connectivity and Adoption

In Lenoir County, 82.44% of locations have access to reliable broadband, and 17.55% are unserved or underserved. Fiber is available to 53.46% of locations and cable to 74.05%, while 16.97% have only DSL or fixed wireless. Unfunded, unserved, and underserved areas are concentrated northwest of Kinston, with sporadic pockets around Kinston and southwest of La Grange. The highest concentration of served locations is in more populated communities such as La Grange, Pink Hill, and Kinston.



Source: NC OneMap

Lenoir County is served by nine internet service providers offering a mix of fiber, cable, fixed wireless, and DSL technologies (*see Table 10*). Optimum's cable network reaches 79.0% of locations, while Brightspeed provides fiber to 48.1% and DSL to 84.2%. Additional fiber is available from Infinitylink Communications (31.2%) and Spectrum (9.4%), with a smaller Spectrum cable presence (6.3%). Fixed-wireless helps round out coverage: US Cellular reaches 97.9%, T-Mobile Home Internet 82.6%, Open Broadband 61.9%, Verizon 45.6%, and Eastern Carolina Broadband 6.4%. Although the technology mix looks robust, availability is uneven. Wired choices are strongest in more populated areas such as La Grange, Pink Hill, and Kinston, while other parts of the county still rely on DSL or fixed-wireless, where fiber or cable are limited. This unevenness means many households have at least one way to get online, but speeds and provider choice can vary widely by neighborhood.

Table 10: Internet Service Providers - Lenoir County

Internet Service Provider	Connection	Availability	Average Download Speed

Brightspeed	Fiber	48.1%	1,142 Mbps
	DSL	84.2%	44 Mbps
Optimum	Cable	79.0%	940 Mbps
Infinitylink Communications	Fiber	31.2%	10,000 Mbps
Spectrum	Fiber	9.4%	1,000 Mbps
	Cable	6.3%	1,000 Mbps
US Cellular	Fixed Wireless	97.9%	45 Mbps
T-Mobile Home Internet	Fixed Wireless	82.6%	63 Mbps
Open Broadband	61.9%	87 Mbps	100 Mbps
Verizon	45.6%	247 Mbps	300 Mbps
Eastern Carolina Broadband	6.4%	100 Mbps	100 Mbps

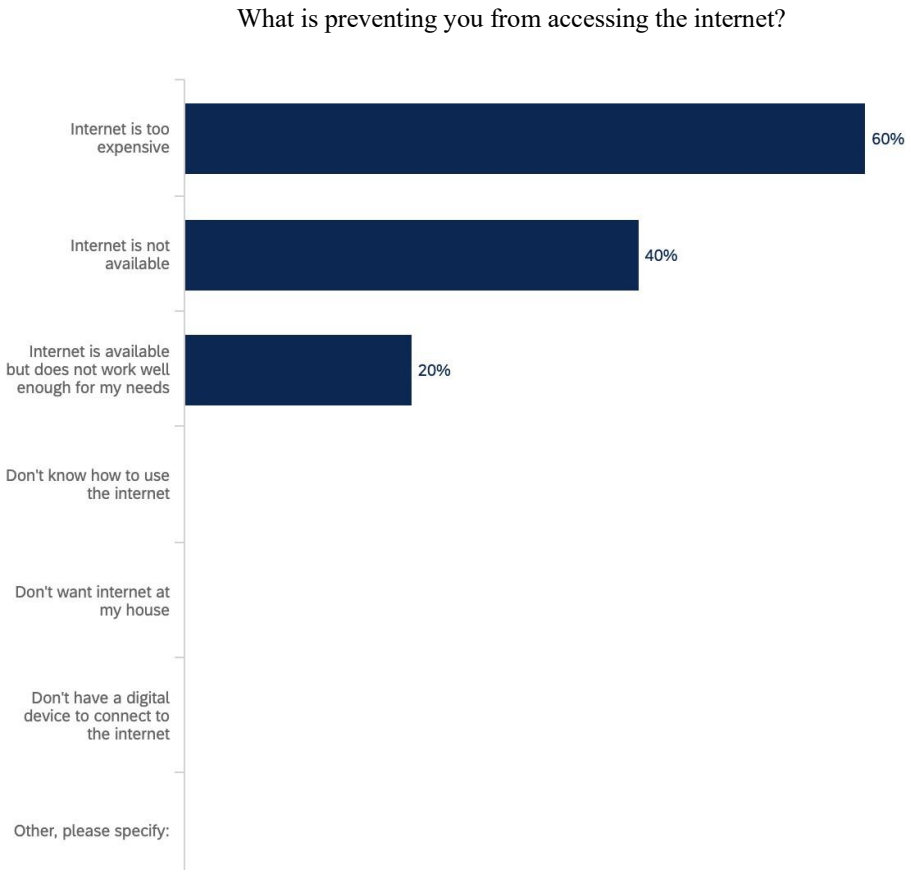
Source: ISP Reports

Resident feedback from the listening session in Lenoir County identified several challenges with internet access in Lenoir County. The majority of residents agreed that service quality, speed, and availability vary by location. In downtown Kinston, for example, residents reported peak-time connectivity issues, while rural areas relying on underground wiring experience unreliable service due to the infrastructure's vulnerability to disruption. Due to residents in Lenoir County relying on one or two provider options within their communities, there is limited competition, which drives cost up and also limits plan choices. Many residents rely on mobile hotspots or travel to public spaces like libraries and parks to get online. Residents opting to use spaces with public Wi-Fi to complete their online tasks often face transportation challenges to get to these spaces, which undermines the utility of these community assets.

Adoption

In terms of broadband adoption, 52.98% of households maintain a broadband subscription, while 17.83% report no internet access. Data from the Digital Opportunity Survey suggests affordability and availability as the top two barriers to not having an internet subscription in their homes. Residents who completed the survey suggested an average of $59 as an affordable cost for home internet. They often use the internet to access information on government services, for recreational purposes, and for public health resources, as well as to complete online applications, enroll in virtual learning, and attend telehealth appointments. During the listening session in Lenoir County, residents identified three clear needs to support adoption. First, they called for expanded fiber infrastructure to deliver more reliable, high-speed service, especially in areas that currently

struggle with slow or inconsistent connections. Second, they expressed a need for better awareness of which internet service providers are available in their area and what types of plans those providers offer. Third, they emphasized the importance of accessible information about funding resources, including help paying for devices, help getting connected, and low-cost service options for households with limited income.



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

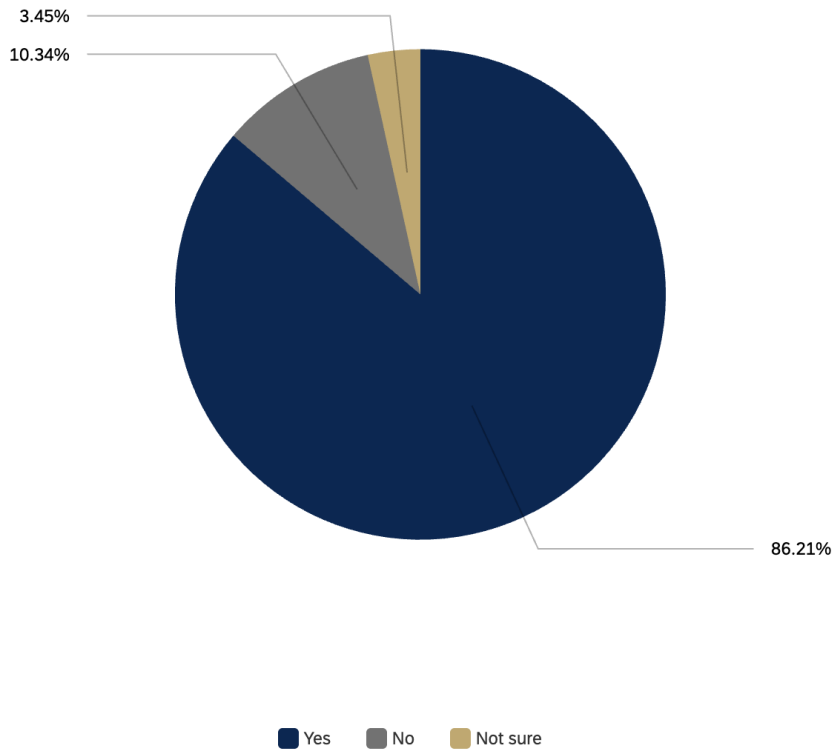
Device Access

Reliable digital devices are essential for residents to access education, employment, health care, and public services. In Lenoir County, 13.12% of households lack computer devices, leaving a portion of the community without laptops, desktops, or tablets to connect online. This gap limits opportunities for residents who depend on digital tools for daily activities and increasingly online-only services.

Data from the North Carolina Digital Opportunity Survey show that 86.21% of respondents felt their household had enough working devices to meet everyone's needs, while 10.34% said they

did not and 3.45% were unsure. Although most residents report having at least one device, many still rely on shared or aging equipment that cannot fully support modern connectivity demands.

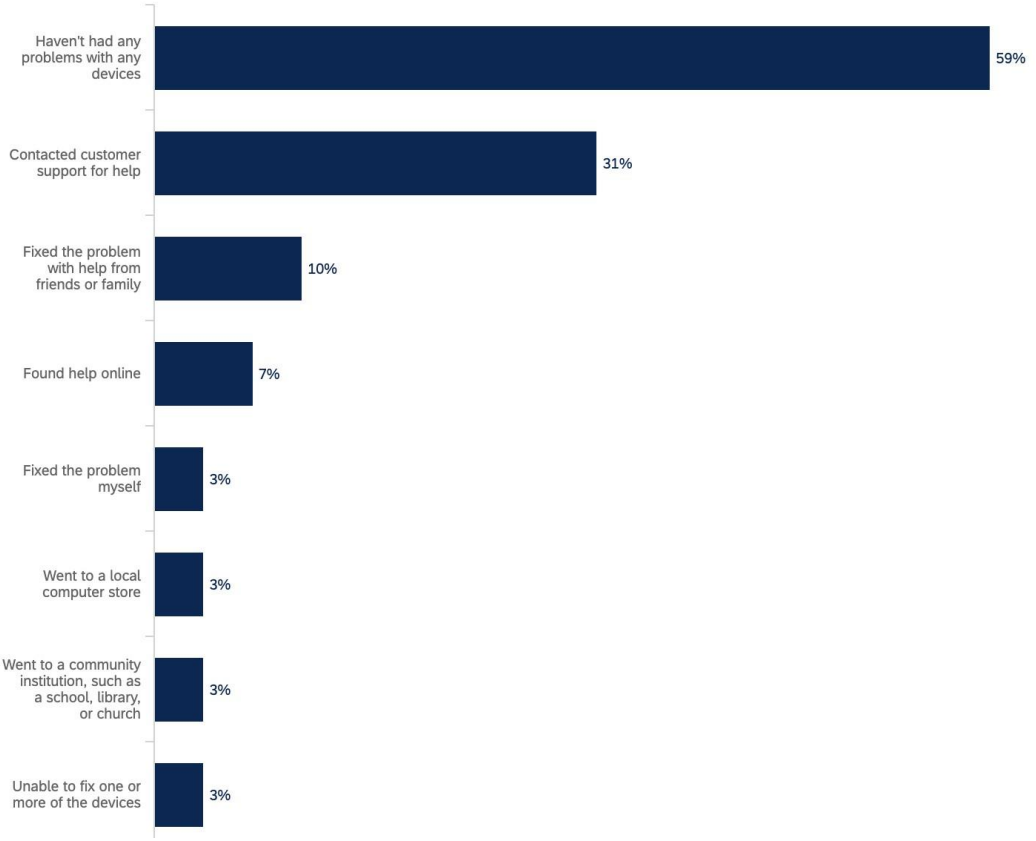
Does your household have enough working digital devices (computers, smart phones, tablets) available to meet the needs of everyone living in this home? (n=31)



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

About 41% of respondents reported experiencing problems with their devices in the six months before completing the survey. When issues arose, residents most commonly contacted customer support (31%) or asked friends or family for help (10%). Fewer residents reported seeking assistance from community anchor institutions such as libraries or schools (3%), suggesting that local repair or support services may be underused or difficult to access.

In the past 6 months, if one of your digital devices failed to function, broke, or stopped working properly how did you deal with the problem you encountered? (Select all that apply)



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

The listening session revealed that cell phones and free government-issued phones are the primary devices for many residents. Many households are still without laptops or desktop computers, and many that have these devices often use older models with limited functionality. While smartphones provide critical connectivity, participants explained that they are not sufficient for tasks such as completing job applications, participating in online classes, or attending virtual medical appointments.

Community members emphasized a strong need for laptops and tablets that can better support digital skill-building, remote learning, and employment activities. They also expressed interest in training on device setup, maintenance, and troubleshooting, noting that even when devices are available, many residents lack the confidence or knowledge to use them effectively. Local organizations such as Kinston Teens have played an important role in identifying these barriers and helping connect youth and families to digital tools and learning opportunities.

Digital Literacy

The listening session and the Digital Opportunity Survey revealed that Lenoir County residents are increasingly using digital tools in daily life but continue to face significant barriers that limit full participation in the digital world. While local organizations provide several digital learning

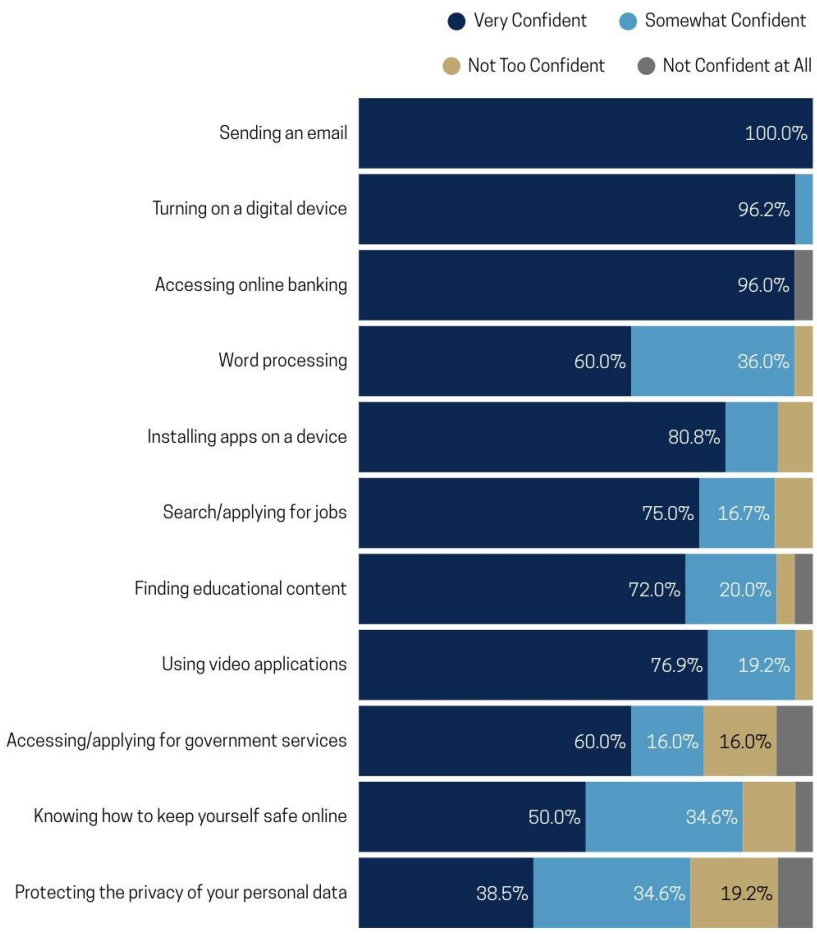
opportunities, many residents reported limited access to devices, low confidence in using technology, and uncertainty about online safety.

Existing digital assets in the county provide a foundation to build upon. The East Kinston Neighborhood Hub, operated by Kinston Teens, offers digital programs and has launched a Digital Navigator training program to equip residents with the skills needed to support others in their community. New Hope Church Ministries has received grant funding to expand its digital space for public use, and both local libraries and the community college offer digital skills classes, although attendance is often limited by capacity and transportation barriers. Informal learning also occurs when children teach their parents, reflecting both creativity and the need for more consistent intergenerational learning opportunities.

Residents expressed a strong desire for hands-on, recurring, and accessible training that builds both digital skills and confidence. Participants identified the need for basic technology and cybersecurity education, including instruction on how to use laptops, tablets, and smartphones safely and effectively. They also emphasized the importance of train-the-community initiatives that empower residents to teach one another, creating sustainable community capacity for digital learning. To increase participation, residents suggested offering classes on weekends (particularly Saturday mornings) at local schools and community centers, and pairing them with community events or incentives such as giveaways or food drives. They also called for better technical support and one-on-one guidance following classes to reinforce new skills. Finally, residents highlighted the need for greater awareness of available digital inclusion programs, funding opportunities, and free or discounted internet services.

Findings from the Digital Opportunity Survey align with these community perspectives. Most respondents reported feeling confident performing basic tasks such as sending emails (100%), turning on a device (96%), and accessing online banking (96%). However, confidence decreased as tasks became more complex or involved privacy and security considerations. The lowest confidence levels were reported in protecting the privacy of personal data (26.9% not confident or somewhat confident), knowing how to keep oneself safe online (15.4%), and accessing or applying for government services (24%). Moderate challenges were also noted in word processing (40%) and finding educational content online (28%).

How confident are you in your abilities for each of the following tasks?



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

County Assets

Lenoir County has a broad and growing network of digital inclusion assets that offer residents access to Wi-Fi, computers, training, and community-based support. The Neuse Regional Libraries anchor this system through the Kinston-Lenoir County Public Library, La Grange Branch Library, and Pink Hill Branch Library, each providing public internet access, technology help, and digital literacy programming. The NRL Digital Resource Rover brings these services into neighborhoods, which helps address barriers faced by residents who cannot easily travel to library locations. Libraries and Lenoir Community College both provide digital literacy classes, although attendance can be limited by transportation challenges and class capacity. Public Wi-Fi zones throughout downtown Kinston and in local public housing also serve as important connection points that can be used as hubs for learning, especially in areas where home internet is unreliable or unaffordable.

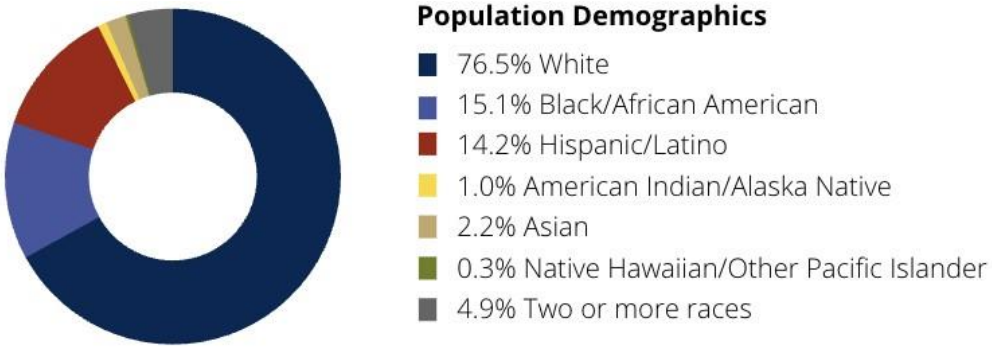
Community organizations play an essential role in expanding digital access and skills training in Lenoir County. Kinston Teens offers digital skills assistance, access to devices, and public Wi-Fi,

and the East Kinston Neighborhood Hub leaves its Wi-Fi open for anyone who needs it. The Hub has also introduced a new program, its Digital Literacy Corps, to train Digital Navigators who are now working in the community to support residents with one-on-one digital learning. NCField, Inc. provides digital skills support that reaches farmworker families, while the Kinston Community Health Center offers public Wi-Fi for patients and families who need to access online health information and services. Local faith-based organizations contribute as well. New Hope Church Ministries recently received grant funds to upgrade its digital space for community use, creating another accessible location for training, device use, and digital support.

Lenoir County also has several community spaces that present opportunities for expanded digital programming. Southeast Elementary School is located near multiple housing communities and could serve as an ideal location for weekend classes or community-based training sessions. The GATE, a faith-based community center, other recreation and community centers, churches, and local schools were all identified as potential venues for digital literacy programming and device support.

Onslow County

Onslow County, located on the southeastern coast of North Carolina, spans approximately 767 square miles and is home to more than 185,000 residents. Established in 1734, the county has a rich history rooted in early pine forest settlements, maritime trade, and agricultural development. The creation of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in the 1940s transformed the region into a major center for military and civilian life. Today, Onslow County includes a mix of urban and rural communities, anchored by Jacksonville, the county seat, and complemented by towns like Richlands, Swansboro, Holly Ridge, and North Topsail Beach. In addition to its military and agricultural presence, tourism plays a vital role in the local economy, driven by the county's coastal beauty, outdoor recreation opportunities, and historic waterfront towns. Visitors are drawn to its beaches, waterways, and cultural sites, contributing to seasonal economic activity and hospitality services across the region.



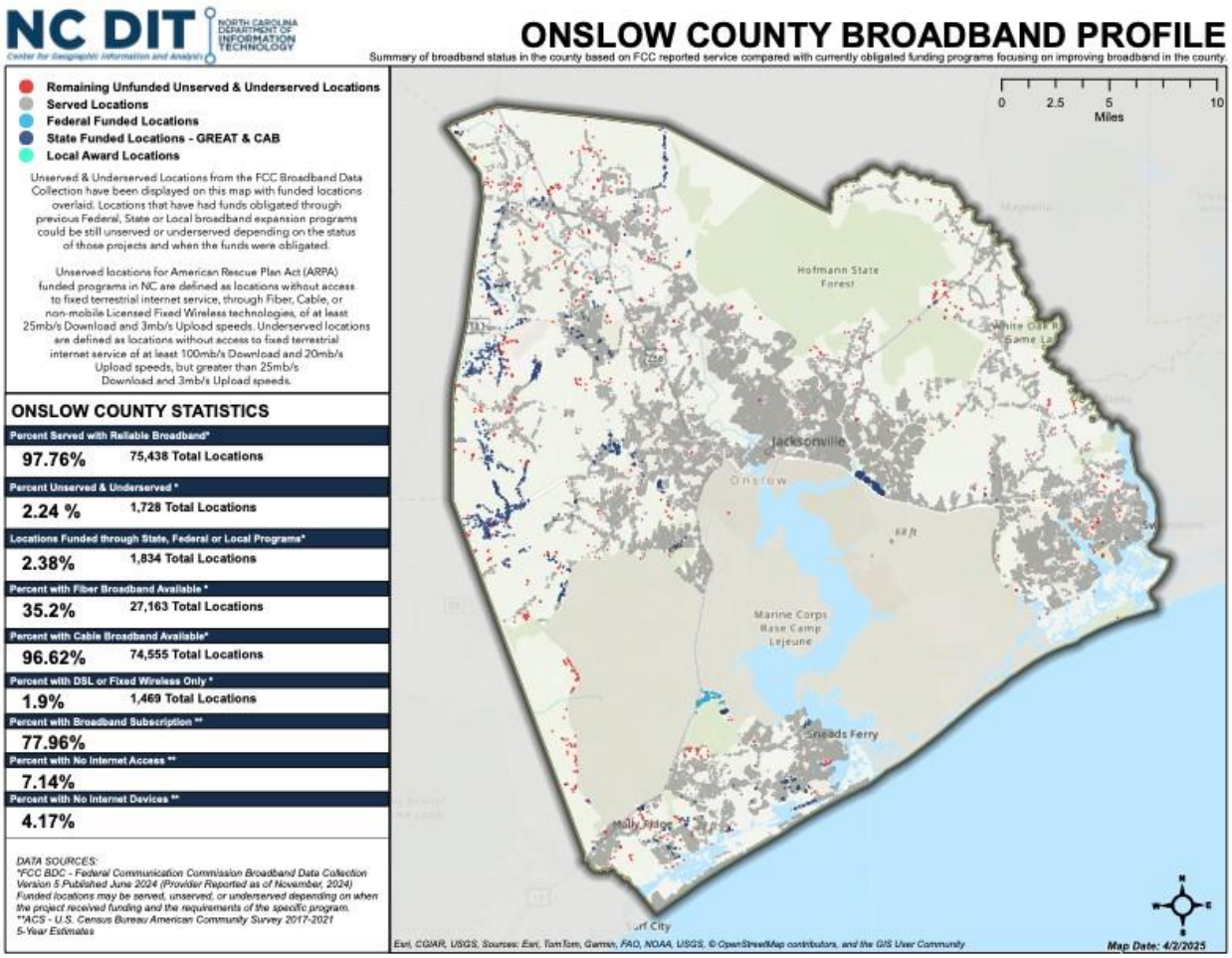
Onslow County has a broad and diverse population that includes several groups at higher risk of digital exclusion. The county has a relatively young population compared to others in the region, with 13.86% of residents aged 60 or older. Educational and literacy challenges are present, as 1.64% of adults face low literacy. Individuals with disabilities make up 17.33% of the population, while veterans represent a significant portion at 21.83%, reflecting the county's strong military

presence and the need for tailored digital resources for this group. Economic challenges persist for some residents, with 23.59% living at or below 150% of the federal poverty level and 1.16% incarcerated. About one-third of the county (34.59%) is rural, which can create disparities in broadband access and service quality between urban and rural areas. Language diversity is modest but notable, with 2.38% of residents identified as English learners and 7% reporting limited English proficiency. Additionally, 23.50% of residents identify as part of an ethnic or racial minority group.

While Onslow County has a dynamic population and important economic assets, the county continues to face significant digital inclusion challenges. Barriers such as limited broadband infrastructure, inconsistent service quality in rural areas, device access gaps, and disparities in digital literacy and affordability restrict access to education, healthcare, workforce development, and essential online services. The following sections examine the digital landscape of Onslow County and outline strategies to promote more equitable and connected communities.

Available Broadband Connectivity and Adoption

In Onslow County, 97.76% of locations have access to reliable broadband, and 12.24% are unserved or underserved. Fiber is available to 35.2% of locations and cable to 96.62%, while 1.9% have only DSL or fixed wireless. Unfunded, unserved, and underserved areas are concentrated in Richlands, Hubert, Holly Ridge, and areas south of Maysville. The highest concentration of served locations appears in Sneads Ferry, North Topsail, western Onslow County, and along the northern border of Camp Lejeune.



Source: [NC OneMap]

Onslow County offers a range of wired options (*see Table 11*). Spectrum cable reaches 83.6% of locations at 1,000 Mbps, and Spectrum fiber is available to 6.7% at 1,000 Mbps. MetroNet provides fiber to 33.8% at 5,120 Mbps, and Brightspeed adds fiber to 26.3% at 913 Mbps along with broad DSL coverage to 77.3% at 61 Mbps. Fixed-wireless expands access across the county. T-Mobile Home Internet covers 75.5% of locations at 62 Mbps, US Cellular 68.5% at 15 Mbps, and Verizon 59.2% at 257 Mbps. Overall, most households have at least one practical option for home internet, with ongoing fiber builds improving speed and competition in a growing share of neighborhoods.

Table 11: Internet Service Providers - Onslow County

Internet Service Provider	Connection	Availability	Average Download Speed
Spectrum	Fiber	6.7%	1,000 Mbps

	Cable	83.6%	1,000 Mbps
Brightspeed	Fiber	26.3%	913 Mbps
	DSL	77.3%	61 Mbps
MetroNet	Fiber	33.8%	5,120 Mbps
T-Mobile Home Internet	Fixed Wireless	75.5%	62 Mbps
US Cellular	Fixed Wireless	68.5%	15 Mbps
Verizon	Fixed Wireless	59.2%	257 Mbps

Source: ISP Reports

Broadband access in Onslow County remains limited, inconsistent, and unaffordable for many residents, particularly for unhoused and low-income individuals. Participants described cost and access to Wi-Fi as major concerns, noting that while most own smartphones, connectivity is unreliable due to widespread coverage gaps and dropped calls. Much of this stems from the concentration of cell towers in population centers and restrictions around Camp Lejeune and New River, which leave surrounding civilian areas with poor signal strength and limited open tower coverage.

These gaps have been especially challenging for students and families. Over the last several years, Onslow County Schools has attempted to mitigate home connectivity barriers by distributing approximately 400–500 cellular hotspots to students without internet access at home. These devices were initially acquired during the COVID-19 pandemic and funded through federal relief grants and the Sprint/T-Mobile 10 Million Connections campaign. While this effort provided critical short-term support, participants noted that it did not fully resolve underlying infrastructure and affordability challenges, particularly for households outside reliable cellular coverage areas

For veterans and the homeless population, these challenges are compounded by the growing dependence on digital solutions for healthcare, such as the VA's Video Connect app and other telehealth programs, supported by initiatives like the Digital Divide Consult, which helps veterans gain the connectivity and devices needed to access online care. Although the homeless shelter and public libraries provide Wi-Fi, usage is often restricted or limited by operational hours, forcing residents to rely on free hotspots at fast food restaurants, motels, and other public spaces. Many unhoused residents have developed mental maps of these access points, demonstrating both the need and the lengths people go to stay connected. Beyond connectivity, affordability remains a critical barrier, as many cannot sustain cell or internet service alongside other living expenses. Participants emphasized the urgent need for affordable broadband and cellular plans, expanded tower and public Wi-Fi coverage, and reliable service that supports daily needs such as work, education, and telehealth.

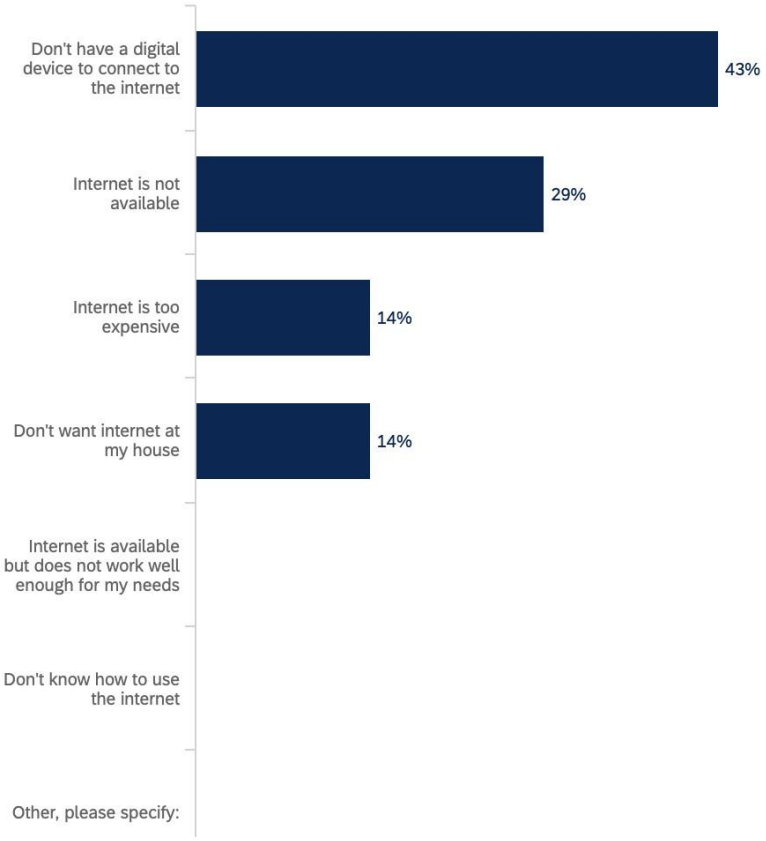
Broadband Infrastructure Investments

Onslow County has received three state-supported broadband infrastructure awards through the Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) and Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) programs. These include one GREAT award granted to Brightspeed and two CAB awards granted to Spectrum and Brightspeed. Collectively, these investments are intended to support the deployment of fiber-based broadband infrastructure to 2,235 households and 265 businesses in unserved and underserved areas of the county.

Adoption

In terms of adoption, 77.96% of households in Onslow County maintain a broadband subscription, and 7.14% report no internet access. Among all ECC counties, Onslow has the lowest percentage of persons with no internet access. The individuals without internet subscription cited lack of internet-enabled devices (43%), availability of service (29%), high costs of internet subscriptions (14%) and lack of interest (14%) as primary barriers for their participation. Residents who completed the survey suggested an average of $69 as an affordable cost for home internet. The internet is often relied on to access information on government services and resources, information on public health services, general information and knowledge, medical appointments, and for recreational purposes.

What is preventing you from accessing the internet?



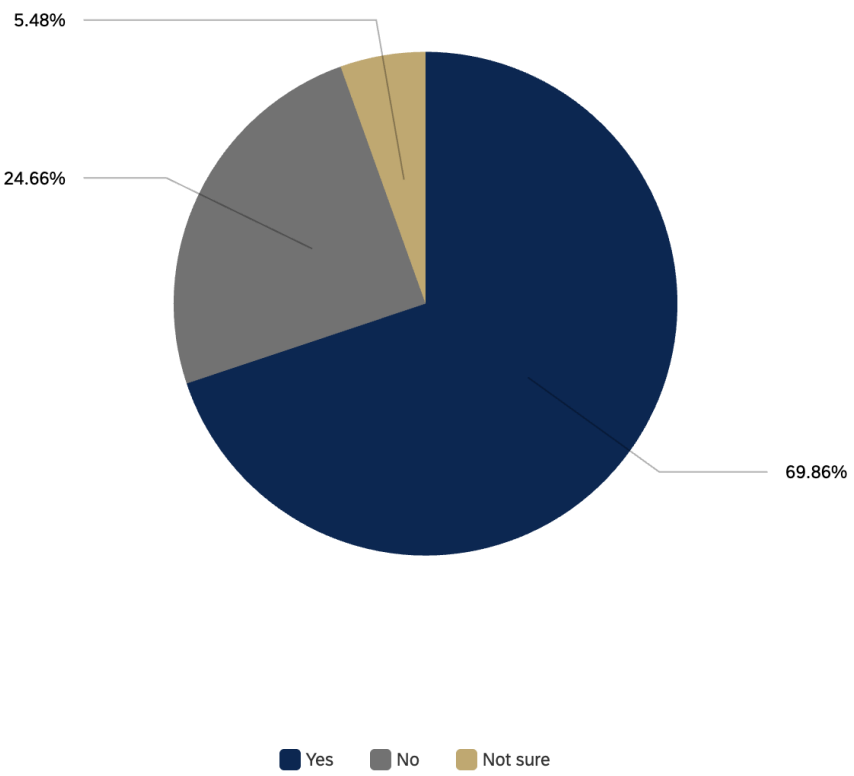
Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

Device Access

Access to reliable and functional digital devices appears relatively strong in Onslow County compared to some neighboring counties; however, important gaps remain. Data from the Broadband Adoption Index show that 4.17% of households do not have access to any large-screen device, such as a desktop, laptop, or tablet, meaning that some residents rely solely on smartphones, which can limit their ability to complete tasks that require larger screens, full keyboards, or assistive features.

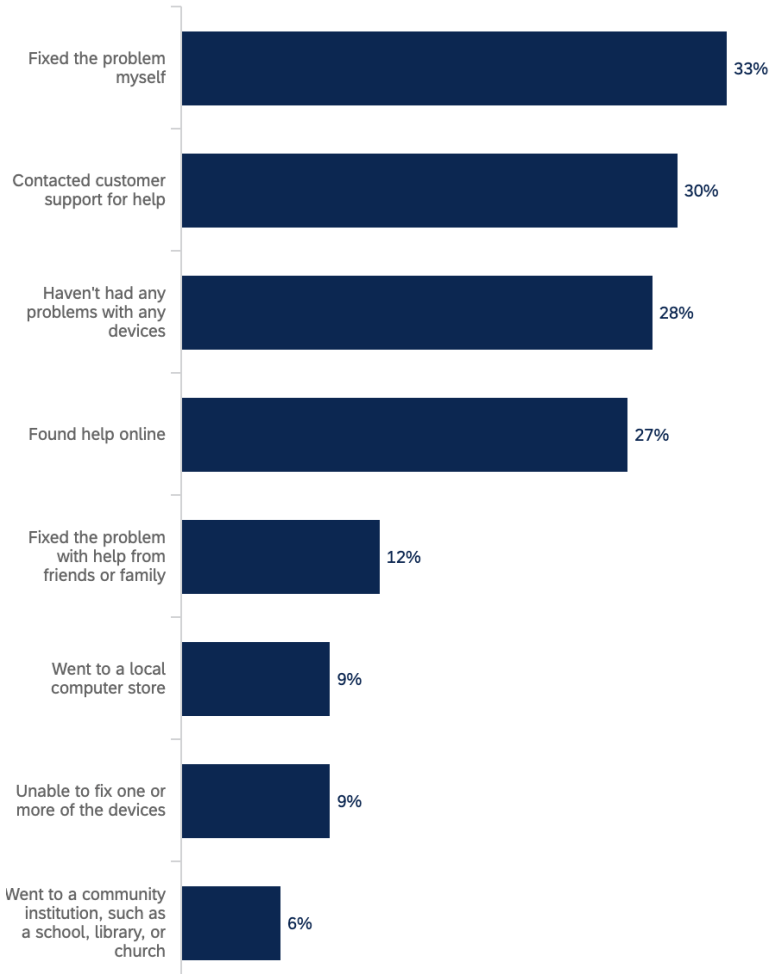
While device ownership is relatively high, having at least one device does not always translate into having enough devices or devices that meet household needs. Findings from the North Carolina Digital Opportunity Survey show that 69.86% of respondents reported having sufficient working devices for all household members, while 24.66% reported insufficient access and 5.48% were unsure. This indicates that nearly one-quarter of households may face challenges related to sharing devices, outdated equipment, or mismatches between device capabilities and user needs.

Does your household have enough working digital devices (computers, smart phones, tablets) available to meet the needs of everyone living in this home? (n=75)



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

Device reliability and maintenance were also common concerns. Seventy-two percent of respondents reported experiencing problems with their devices within the six months prior to completing the survey. When faced with these challenges, fixing the problem themselves (33%), contacting customer support (30%), and looking for help online (27%) were the most commonly used approaches to address their device issues. Only 7% of selections involved seeking help from community institutions such as libraries, schools, or churches. This pattern suggests that residents tend to rely on personal problem-solving and remote assistance rather than repair or support services from local community anchor institutions.



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

Listening sessions provided valuable context for understanding how residents use devices and navigate digital access in daily life. All attendees owned and used smartphones, describing them as a necessity rather than a luxury. Smartphone usage and confidence, however, varied widely. Younger residents were generally skilled and comfortable using both phones and computers, while older adults expressed a desire to improve their digital abilities, with one participant describing themselves as a "technology dinosaur."

Smartphones also play an essential role for unhoused individuals, who rely on them for communication, telehealth appointments, job applications, and staying in contact with family. Lifeline phones, which offer low-cost or free smartphones for eligible users, were mentioned as a critical resource for both veterans and civilians, though awareness of these programs appears limited. Residents identified several ongoing needs, including mobile internet access, expanded distribution of portable hotspots and chargers, and greater awareness of legitimate assistance

programs that offer discounted or free devices. These tools are especially important for residents who rely solely on smartphones or who lack a stable home internet connection.

Digital Literacy

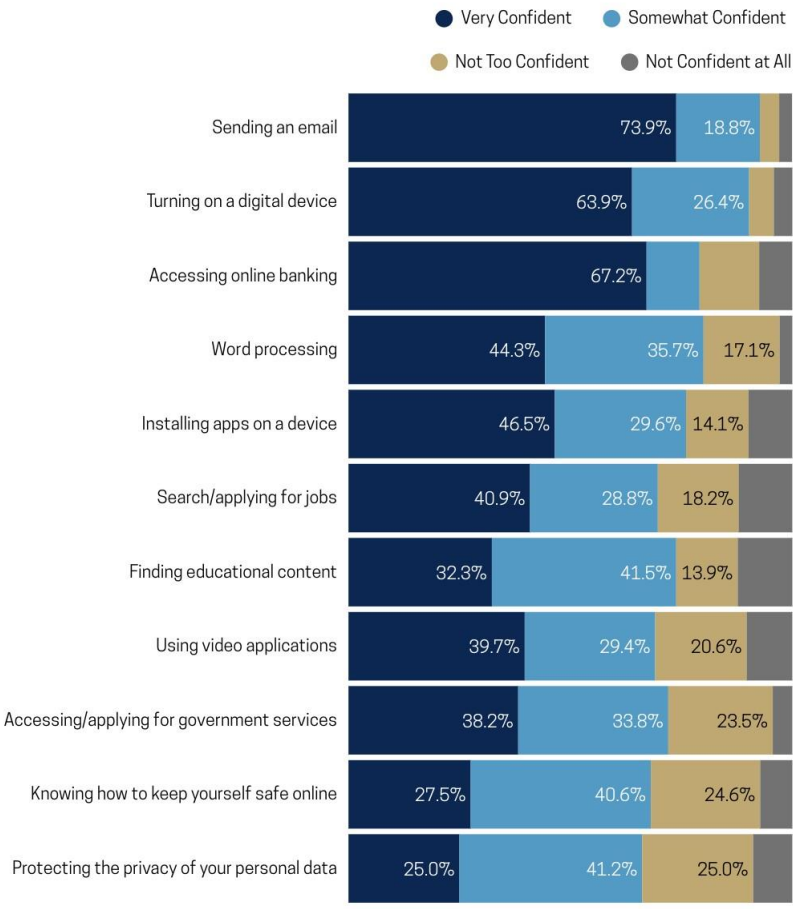
Listening sessions and the Digital Opportunity Survey revealed that Onslow County residents have diverse digital skill levels, with clear differences between younger and older participants. Younger residents reported being comfortable using smartphones and computers, while many older adults described limited skills and low confidence. Several participants shared that they rely on their children or grandchildren for help with devices and expressed fear of "messing things up" when trying to learn independently. Overall, residents showed a strong desire to improve their digital comfort and skills but emphasized the need for patient, hands-on instruction and supportive learning environments.

Participants recommended expanding digital literacy classes in community spaces where residents already gather. They suggested offering evening computer classes onsite at community outreach spaces or at churches, since those locations often have computers available. Veterans also emphasized the need for training on telehealth apps and online healthcare portals to support their medical needs. Participants further noted that qualified instructors and one-on-one support would help residents feel more comfortable and confident while learning.

Participants also viewed technology as a potential bridge rather than a barrier. They noted that AI and voice-to-text features could help individuals with low literacy or limited typing ability engage more effectively online. While challenges persist, residents expressed optimism that consistent, personalized support could build their confidence and reduce anxiety around learning new technologies.

Findings from the Digital Opportunity Survey reinforce these insights. Most respondents reported feeling comfortable performing basic tasks such as sending emails (93%) and turning on a device (90%), but confidence declined for more complex or security-related skills. The lowest confidence levels were reported in protecting the privacy of personal data (33.8% not confident or somewhat confident) and knowing how to keep oneself safe online (31.9%). Additional challenges were observed in finding educational content online (26.2%), accessing or applying for government services (27.9%), and using video applications such as Zoom or FaceTime (30.9%).

How confident are you in your abilities for each of the following tasks?



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

County Assets

Onslow County has a wide and active network of digital inclusion assets that provide residents with access to computers, Wi-Fi, devices, and digital skills support. The Onslow County Public Library system, which includes the Jacksonville Main Library, Richlands Branch Library, Sneads Ferry Branch Library, and Swansboro Branch Library, offers public internet access and computer use across multiple communities. Several branches also provide digital skills help, giving residents reliable spaces to complete online tasks, access educational resources, and receive informal technology assistance.

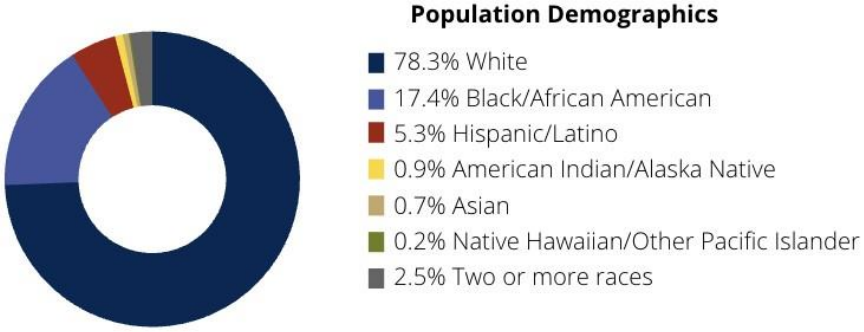
Education and workforce development partners further strengthen digital access across the county. Coastal Carolina Community College provides both digital skills support and public computer

access, which benefits students, jobseekers, and adult learners who rely on these services for classes, career development, and essential online services. Onslow County Schools offer device access for students and families who need school-issued technology to complete assignments and participate in digital learning. NCWorks Career Center adds another layer of support by offering public computers, Wi-Fi, and digital assistance for individuals seeking employment, career transitions, or workforce training opportunities.

Additional community assets contribute to device access and targeted digital support. Onslow County Senior Services provides digital skills help and public internet access for older adults who need assistance with email, online forms, and daily digital tasks. Roots offers digital skills resources that support community members who need basic instruction, while Onslow Community Outreach provides public Wi-Fi for individuals who need a reliable connection. The Kramden Institute supports device distribution, offering residents a pathway to obtain affordable computers. Together, these assets form a broad network of digital resources across Onslow County. Increasing promotion of available services and expanding programming through community partners, libraries, senior services, and educational institutions can help more residents take advantage of the digital tools already available to them.

Pamlico County

Pamlico County, located along the Inner Banks of eastern North Carolina, is a predominantly rural coastal county known for its scenic waterways, maritime heritage, and agricultural economy. The county spans approximately 337 square miles and is home to just over 12,000 residents as of 2024, resulting in a population density of roughly 36 persons per square mile. The county seat, Bayboro, along with small towns like Grantsboro, Oriental, and Alliance, form the heart of community life in the region. With an economy shaped by commercial fishing, farming, and tourism, Pamlico County is also home to a growing retiree population that is significantly higher than the state average.

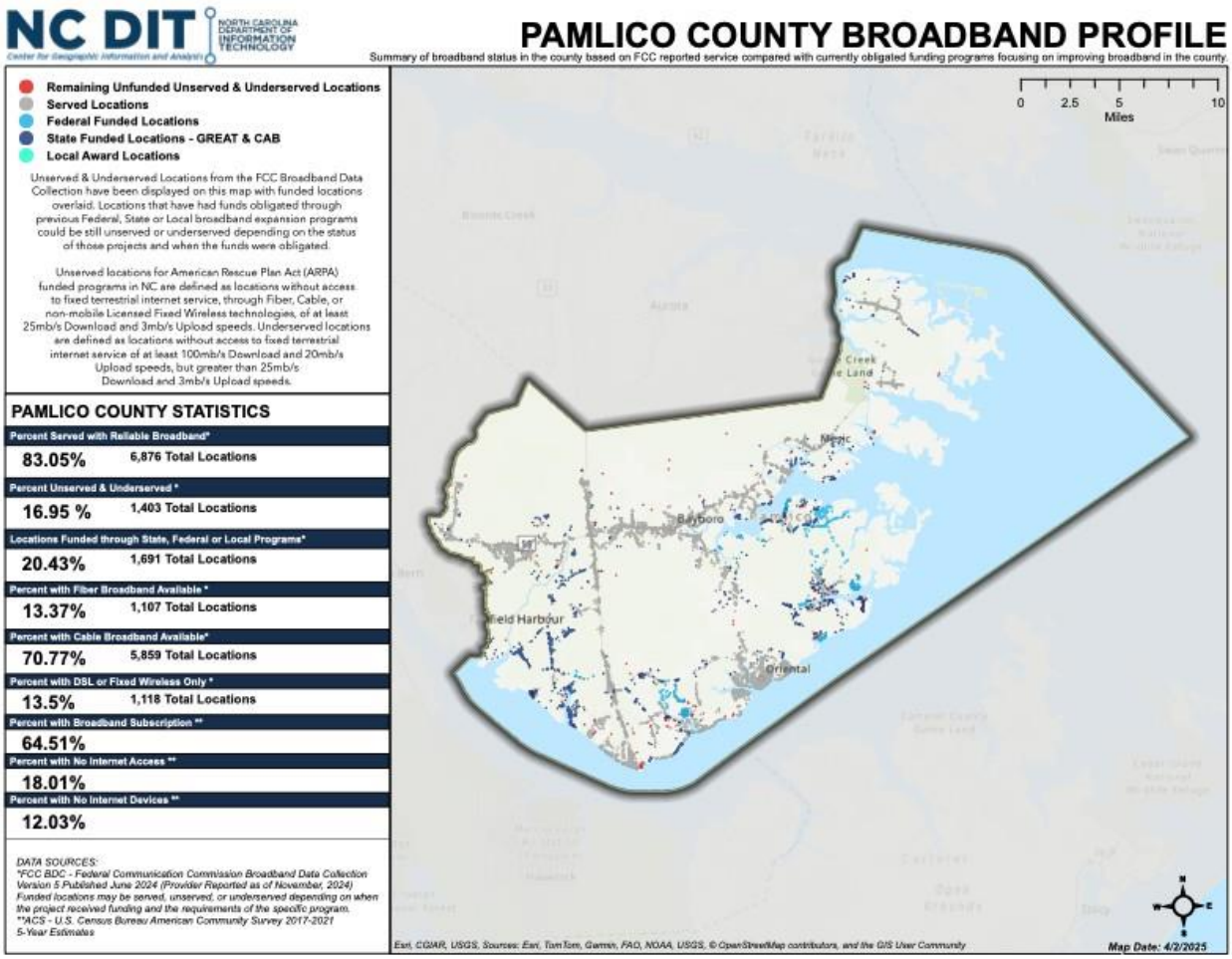


Pamlico County is a fully rural community (100% rural) with several demographic groups that face barriers to digital access and participation. The county has an aging population, with 40.68% of residents aged 60 or older, one of the highest proportions in the region. Educational and literacy challenges are also present, as 3.88% of adults face low literacy. Individuals with disabilities make up 19.62% of the population, and veterans account for 12.25%, indicating a need for inclusive and accessible digital resources. Economic challenges are evident, with 22.16% of residents living at or below 150% of the federal poverty level and 1.56% incarcerated. Language barriers affect a small portion of residents, with 1.12% identified as English learners and 7% reporting limited English proficiency. Additionally, 21.7% of residents identify as part of an ethnic or racial minority group.

Despite its natural beauty and close-knit communities, Pamlico County faces notable challenges in advancing digital equity. Like many rural areas, the county contends with gaps in broadband infrastructure, limited internet service options, affordability barriers, and a need for greater digital literacy resources. These disparities hinder full participation in essential aspects of modern life, including education, employment, health care, and access to government services. The following sections provide a snapshot of Pamlico County's digital landscape and outline opportunities for building a more inclusive, connected future.

Available Broadband Connectivity and Adoption

In Pamlico County, 83.05% of locations have access to reliable broadband, and 16.95% are unserved or underserved. Fiber is available to 13.37% of locations and cable to 70.77%, while 13.5% have only DSL or fixed wireless. Unfunded, unserved, and underserved locations appear in a sporadic area north of Minnesott Beach and around the YMCA of the Triangle camps Sea Gull and Seafarer, as well as on the outskirts of Grantsboro, Alliance, and Bayboro. Served locations are concentrated in more-populated central areas such as Grantsboro and areas west of it, Oriental, Alliance, Bayboro, and Mesic, with additional clusters around Whortonsville and Lowland along Lowland Road, along NC Highway 306, along and south of NC Highway 304, and along the southern coast of the county.



Source: NC OneMap

Pamlico County is served by six service providers with fiber, cable, DSL, and fixed-wireless options (*see Table 12*). Spectrum cable reaches 76.9% of locations at 1,000 Mbps, with Spectrum fiber available to 20.1% at 1,000 Mbps. Brightspeed offers fiber to 16.7% at 754 Mbps and maintains wide DSL availability to 86.9% at 42 Mbps. Optimum adds a smaller cable presence at 4.0% at 940 Mbps. Fixed-wireless provides additional options. US Cellular covers 78.6% of locations at 15 Mbps, T-Mobile Home Internet reaches 48.5% at 51 Mbps, and Verizon covers 14.0% at 131 Mbps. Together, these services give most households at least one way to get online, with cable and DSL doing most of the coverage work and fiber expanding in selected areas.

Table 12: Internet Service Providers - Pamlico County

Internet Service Provider	Connection	Availability	Average Download Speed
Brightspeed	Fiber	16.7%	754 Mbps

	DSL	86.9%	42 Mbps
Spectrum	Fiber	20.1%	1,000 Mbps
	Cable	76.9%	1,000 Mbps
Optimum	Cable	4.0%	940 Mbps
US Cellular	Fixed Wireless	78.6%	15 Mbps
T-Mobile Home Internet	Fixed Wireless	48.5%	51 Mbps
Verizon	Fixed Wireless	14.0%	131 Mbps

Source: ISP Reports

The listening session in Pamlico County highlighted several infrastructure and support needs. Residents described an urgent need for better cell phone coverage, noting widespread dead zones in many parts of the county. They also called for more affordable plans with better service quality, as well as improvements to underground electrical infrastructure in this low-lying, flood-prone area so that power and internet do not fail whenever flooding occurs. Community members want better performance and reliability from existing providers, including Verizon, US Cellular, Straight Talk, Brightspeed (formerly CenturyLink), and Spectrum. They also noted that the county lacks in-person technology support, forcing residents to travel to New Bern or rely on remote customer service. Finally, participants emphasized the need for clearer communication, awareness, and outreach about available technology resources and support, and recommended creating universal Wi-Fi hubs where community members can reliably get online.

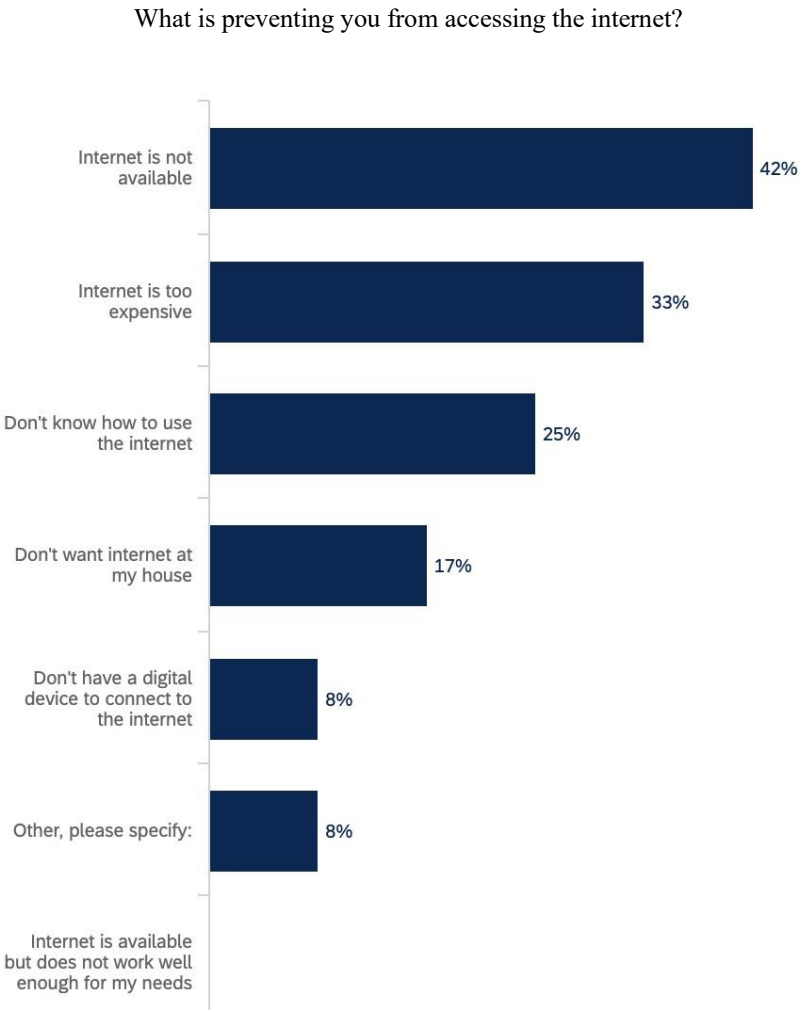
Broadband Infrastructure Investments

Pamlico County has received four state-supported broadband infrastructure awards through the Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) and Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) programs. These include one GREAT award granted to Spectrum and three CAB awards granted to Brightspeed. Collectively, these investments are intended to support the deployment of fiber-based broadband infrastructure to 1,300 households and 36 businesses in unserved and underserved areas of the county.

Adoption

In terms of adoption, 64.51% of households maintain a broadband subscription, and 18.01% report no internet access. Data from the Digital Opportunity Survey suggests that lack of availability, affordability, and limited knowledge about the use of the internet are the top three barriers to not having an internet subscription in residents' homes. Residents who completed the survey noted that they use the internet to access information on government services and resources and for recreation, and suggested an average of $67 as an affordable cost for home internet. Listening

session data revealed that many families rely heavily on mobile hotspots to connect computers for homework or work-related tasks and oftentimes, had to resort to public Wi-Fi spots to gain access. Public agencies and businesses (e.g., EMS, Dollar General, gas stations) experience service interruptions that affect operations, showing county-wide dependence on broadband.



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

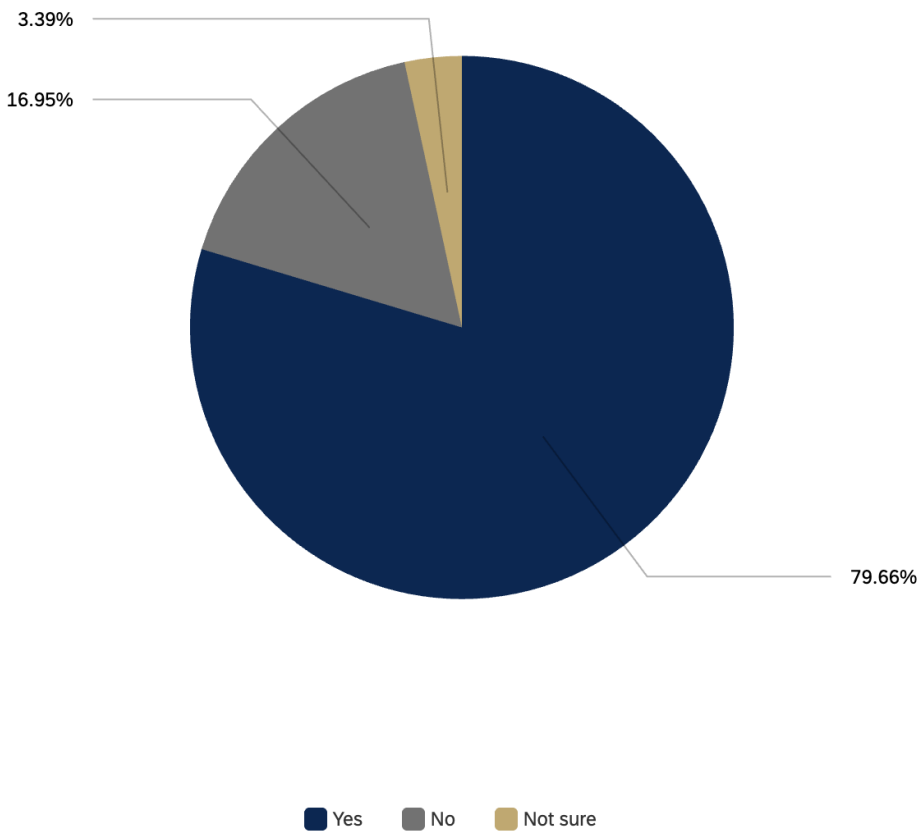
Device Access

Access to reliable and affordable digital devices remains a key factor in supporting education, communication, and daily life for residents of Pamlico County. Data from the Broadband Adoption Index show that 12.03% of households lack computer devices, reflecting a continuing gap in access to desktops, laptops, and tablets needed for learning, employment, and online services.

Results from the North Carolina Digital Opportunity Survey provide additional insight into how residents experience and manage device access. When asked whether their household had enough working devices to meet everyone's needs, 79.66% of respondents said yes, 16.95% said no, and 3.39% were not sure. These figures indicate that while most households have some form of access,

a meaningful share of residents still struggle to secure or maintain adequate devices for all family members.

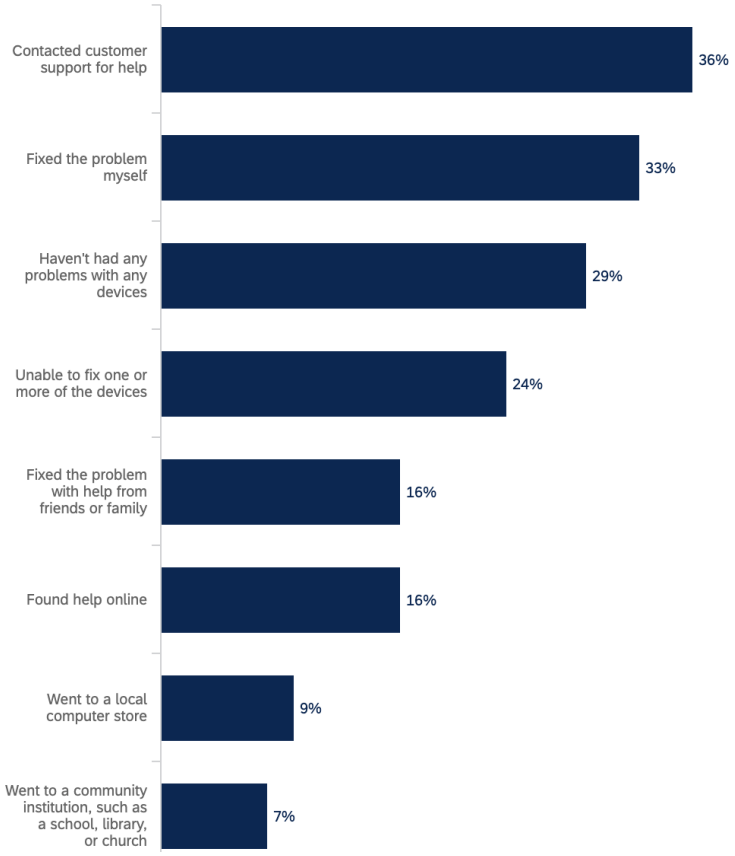
Does your household have enough working digital devices (computers, smart phones, tablets) available to meet the needs of everyone living in this home? (n=61)



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

Device reliability and repair were also areas of concern. About 71% of respondents reported experiencing device problems within six months of completing the survey. When asked how they dealt with those issues, 36% contacted customer support, 33% fixed the problem themselves, and 24% were unable to resolve the problem at all. Only 7% sought help from a community institution, such as a library, school, or church, suggesting that local resources for device repair and technical support are either limited or underutilized.

In the past 6 months, if one of your digital devices failed to function, broke, or stopped working properly how did you deal with the problem you encountered? (Select all that apply)



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

The listening session in Pamlico County highlighted both opportunities and ongoing needs related to device access, particularly among students and families. Several schools provide temporary access to technology—charter school students receive Chromebooks during the academic year, though devices must be returned at year's end. A $100 cleaning fee and $30 technology fee are also required, which may pose a burden for some families. Middle and upper school students are allowed to take Chromebooks home, but at Fred Anderson Elementary, devices are available only in the classroom. These differences underscore the uneven access to take-home devices across schools and age groups.

Participants identified a clear need for affordable and permanent device access for families, especially parents who need computers to support their children's schoolwork. They also expressed interest in discounted purchasing options that would allow families to obtain and maintain devices for both school and home use. In addition, residents noted that the county would benefit from more computer repair shops or local technical support services, as existing options are scarce and many households struggle to afford or access repairs when devices fail.

Digital Literacy

Listening sessions and the Digital Opportunity Survey revealed that Pamlico County residents have access to a range of digital learning opportunities but continue to need stronger awareness, coordination, and personalized support to build digital confidence. While local institutions provide valuable training programs, participation remains limited by factors such as access, outreach, and the need for ongoing assistance after classes and transportation to and from classes.

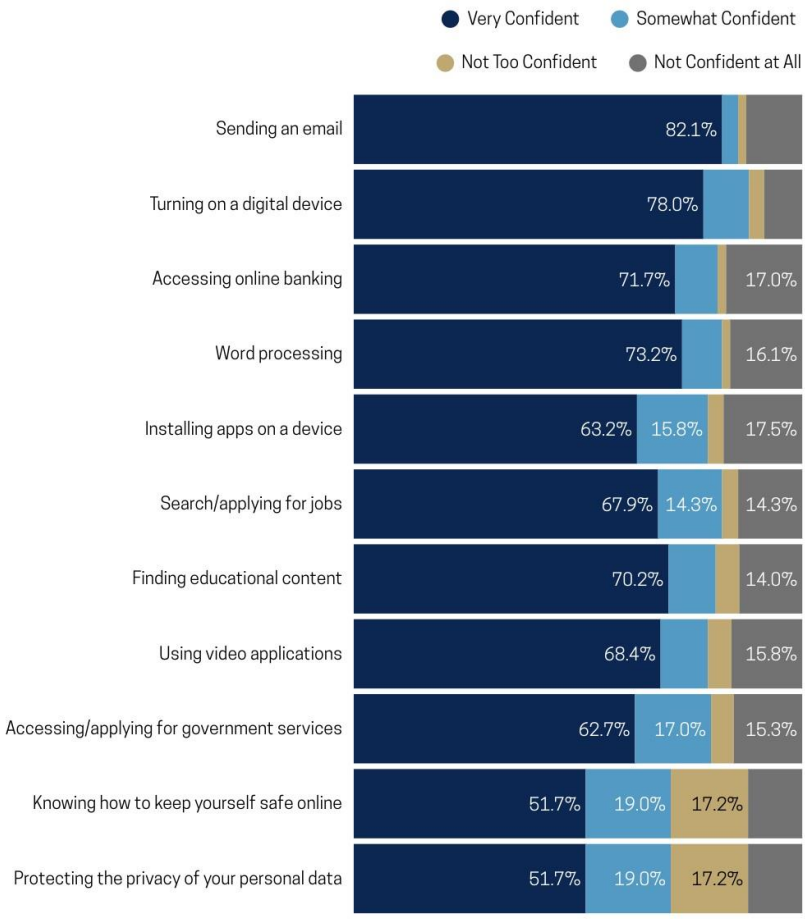
Existing assets in Pamlico County provide a strong foundation for digital literacy efforts. The Pamlico County Library offers free digital literacy classes, and Pamlico Community College provides digital skills courses, although some may require small fees that can limit participation. Charter schools in the county also play a critical role in building digital familiarity by providing 1:1 student support and maintaining small class sizes, which help both students and parents develop comfort using digital tools. Additionally, the use of Google Classroom and PowerSchool portals in local schools offers structured exposure to technology for families, reinforcing digital engagement through education. Although the platforms are available, parents need instruction on how to use them. Residents call for parent support from schools to assist them with navigating these platforms and portals.

Residents emphasized the need to expand community-based digital literacy classes and increase awareness of existing opportunities. Participants suggested developing a local technical assistance program that could provide on-site help, phone-based support, or a community digital navigator to guide residents through digital tasks. They also recommended integrating digital literacy with broader community activities such as programs at schools, churches, and social spaces to make learning more accessible and relevant.

While many residents are already using the internet for daily activities like communication, bill payment, and job applications, participants noted that cybersecurity awareness and safe online practices remain critical areas for improvement. They also expressed interest in training that provides hands-on experience and includes follow-up support so learners can practice new skills and resolve challenges after completing classes.

Findings from the Digital Opportunity Survey reinforce these insights. Most respondents reported confidence with basic tasks such as sending emails (85%) and turning on a device (88%), showing strong foundational skills. However, confidence declined when tasks required managing personal information or navigating more advanced systems. The lowest confidence levels were reported in keeping oneself safe online (27% not confident or somewhat confident) and protecting the privacy of personal data (29%). Residents also reported moderate challenges with accessing or applying for government services (20%), installing apps on devices (21%), and word processing tasks (19%).

How confident are you in your abilities for each of the following tasks?



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

County Assets

Pamlico County has a small but meaningful set of digital inclusion assets that provide residents with access to computers, Wi-Fi, and opportunities to build technology skills. The Pamlico County Library and the Marybelle Hollowell Annex serve as the primary public access points in the county. Both locations offer public computers, Wi-Fi, and community spaces where residents can complete online tasks, access digital resources, and receive informal technology assistance. These library branches are essential for residents who rely on free and reliable internet service for communication, education, employment, and daily activities.

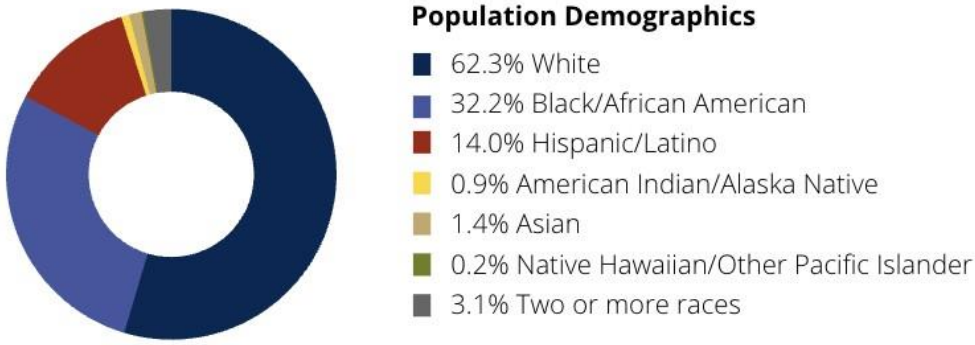
Pamlico County Senior Services is another key asset that expands digital access for older adults. The center offers public Wi-Fi, computer access, and digital skills help that supports seniors who need assistance with devices, email, online forms, and other essential tasks. This resource is particularly important because of the challenges many older adults face with learning new

technology and maintaining digital confidence. The availability of on-site help offers a familiar and accessible environment for building digital skills.

Additional support comes from the Pamlico Correctional Institution, which provides digital skills training that prepares individuals for reentry by introducing basic technology use and essential digital competencies. Although Pamlico County has only a few core digital assets, these resources form a foundational network of support for the community. Increasing visibility of available services and exploring partnerships with community institutions, churches, and local schools could help expand training opportunities and ensure that more residents are able to use the digital tools and connections already available to them.

Wayne County

Wayne County, located in inland Eastern North Carolina, is a diverse county that blends urban centers, small towns, and rural farmland. Spanning approximately 554 square miles, the county is home to an estimated 118,700 residents as of 2024, with a population density of about 214 persons per square mile. Goldsboro, the county seat, serves as the economic and cultural hub, supported by surrounding towns such as Mount Olive, Fremont, and Pikeville. The local economy is anchored by manufacturing, agriculture, healthcare, and the presence of Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, which brings a significant military and veteran population to the area and adds to the county's diversity. Wayne County's demographics reflect a blend of working families, service members, and a steadily growing aging population.



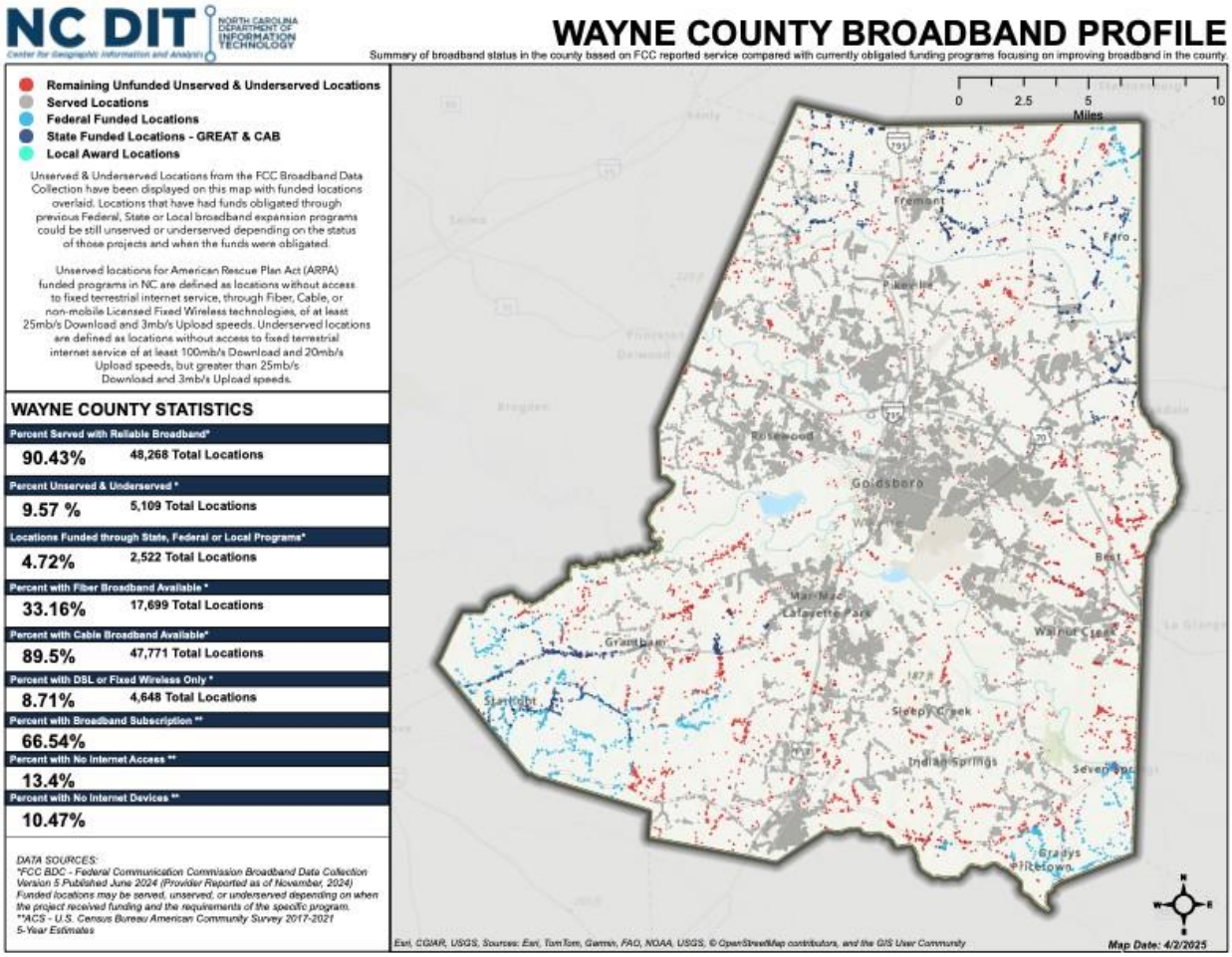
Wayne County has a diverse population with varying needs across its covered groups. Nearly one in four residents (23.35%) are aged 60 or older, reflecting a significant aging population that may require focused digital literacy and access initiatives. Educational and literacy barriers also affect some adults, with 5.31% experiencing low literacy. Individuals with disabilities make up 15.83% of the population, and veterans represent 11.97%, highlighting the need for accessible technologies

and digital inclusion efforts tailored to these communities. Economic challenges are notable, with 29.47% of residents living at or below 150% of the federal poverty level and 1.98% incarcerated. The county is nearly half rural (44.45%), which can affect broadband infrastructure and access to reliable, affordable internet service. Language diversity contributes to local access needs, as 5.04% of residents are English learners and 7% report limited English proficiency. Additionally, 37.7% of residents identify as part of an ethnic or racial minority group.

Despite its economic assets and institutional presence, Wayne County faces persistent challenges in advancing digital equity. Many communities, particularly in rural areas, experience gaps in broadband infrastructure, limited internet service provider options, and barriers to affordability, device access, and digital literacy. These challenges limit residents' ability to fully engage in online education, workforce development, telehealth, and essential services. Addressing these disparities is critical to ensuring that all Wayne County residents can meaningfully participate in an increasingly digital society. The following sections present an overview of the county's digital inclusion landscape and explore opportunities to expand equitable access to internet, technology, and support services.

Available Broadband Connectivity and Adoption

In Wayne County, 90.43% of locations have access to reliable broadband, and 9.57% are unserved or underserved. Fiber is available to 33.16% of locations and cable to 89.5%, while 8.71% have only DSL or fixed wireless. Unfunded, unserved, and underserved locations appear in scattered pockets across the county. The highest concentration of served locations include Goldsboro, Faro, areas west of Grantham, and areas surrounding Fremont, with additional coverage in northern Wayne County along the Wilson County border. Wayne County has the second highest concentration of farmers in the region, and one of the highest in the state. Unfunded, unserved, and underserved locations in Wayne County often correspond to areas of high numbers of farmworkers both permanent residents and migrants.



Source: NC OneMap

Wayne County is served by about ten broadband service providers and has a wide mix of wired service (*see Table 13*). Spectrum cable reaches 89.3% of locations at 1,000 Mbps, and Spectrum fiber is available to 4.7% at 1,000 Mbps. AT&T and Earthlink each show fiber availability at 45.2% with advertised speeds near 4,868 Mbps, along with DSL to 63.1% at 45 Mbps; these listings typically reflect the same underlying network. Lumos Networks adds fiber to 12.1% at 4,997 Mbps. Brightspeed offers an additional DSL option to 10.4% at 35 Mbps, and Optimum has a smaller cable presence at 3.5% at 940 Mbps. Fixed-wireless provides broad additional coverage. Open Broadband reaches 96.5% of locations at 100 Mbps, US Cellular 91.3% at 24 Mbps, T-Mobile Home Internet 87.5% at 67 Mbps, Verizon 53.1% at 260 Mbps, and AT&T/Earthlink list fixed-wireless availability to 39.5% at 25 Mbps. Overall, most households have at least one practical way to get online, with fiber and high-capacity cable continuing to expand competition and speeds.

Table 13: Internet Providers - Wayne County

Internet Service Provider	Connection	Availability	Average Download Speed
Spectrum	Fiber	4.7%	1,000 Mbps
	Cable	89.3%	1,000 Mbps
Earthlink	Fiber	45.2%	4,868 Mbps
	DSL	63.1%	45 Mbps
	Fixed Wireless	39.5%	25 Mbps
AT&T	Fiber	45.2%	4,868 Mbps
	DSL	63.1%	45 Mbps
	Fixed Wireless	39.5%	25 Mbps
Lumos Networks	Fiber	12.1%	4,997 Mbps
Brightspeed	DSL	10.4%	35 Mbps
Optimum	Cable	3.5%	940 Mbps
Open Broadband	Fixed Wireless	96.5%	100 Mbps
US Cellular	Fixed Wireless	91.3%	24 Mbps
T-Mobile Home Internet	Fixed Wireless	87.5%	67 Mbps
Verizon	Fixed Wireless	53.1%	260 Mbps

Source: ISP Reports

The listening session in Wayne County highlighted two major priorities: affordability and uneven access to reliable, high-speed internet across the county, particularly in rural areas, on farms, in public housing, and in the southern part of the county. Participants emphasized that many farmworkers and their families live in employer-provided housing located on farms or along secondary roads where broadband infrastructure has not been extended, leaving them without reliable internet access even via smartphones. Residents called for free or subsidized internet service, including ACP-style support and affordable or universal options for all, with particular attention to seniors. They stressed the need to expand rural broadband, improve Wi-Fi quality in public housing, and ensure that every area of the county is included in future infrastructure investments. Limited competition among internet service providers was identified as a key driver of high costs. Participants expressed interest in Lumos, a new and slightly cheaper competitor, though its coverage remains limited.

While downtown areas of Goldsboro benefit from free public Wi-Fi, remote communities remain largely underserved, leaving many families dependent on mobile hotspots or satellite internet, which are often unreliable and ineffective due to seclusion and poor signal strength. Community members recommended engaging major employers such as Butterball and Mt. Olive Pickles to sponsor community technology hubs, expanding church partnerships to create safe access points with free Wi-Fi, and developing corporate sponsorship models inspired by international examples. Finally, they emphasized the need for clear, proactive information about available resources and income-based programs, noting that residents in the southern part of the county and migrant workers using older, prepaid cell phones often face the greatest connectivity challenges and must search for public Wi-Fi just to get online.

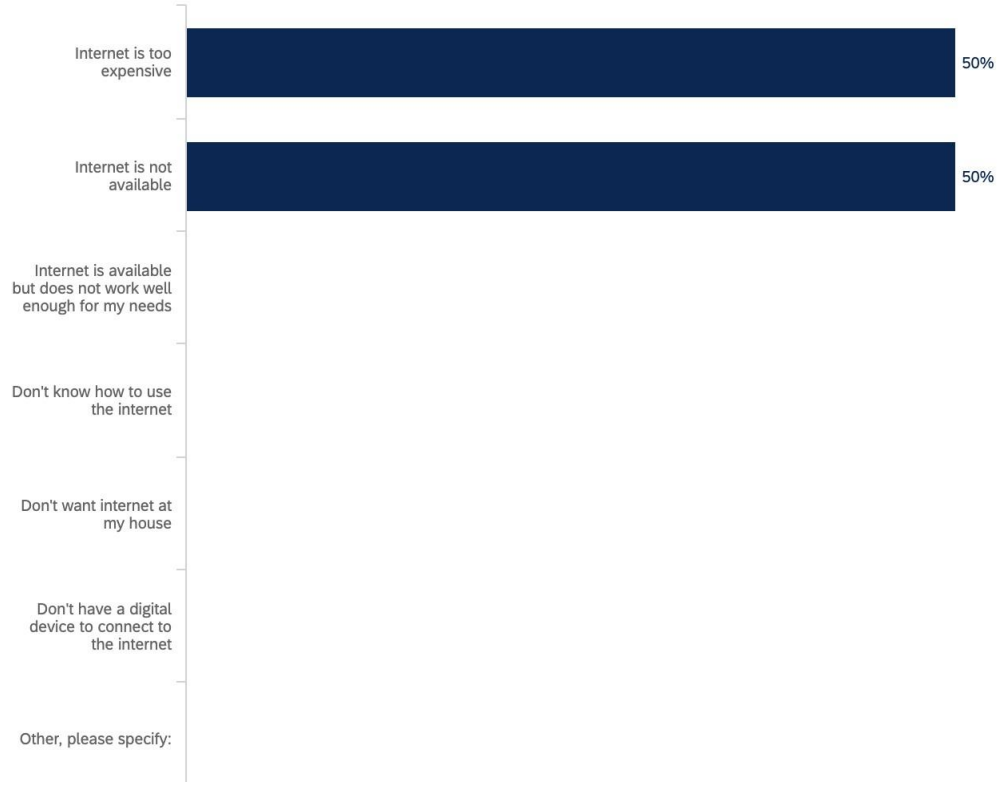
Broadband Infrastructure Investments

Wayne County has received four state-supported broadband infrastructure awards through the Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) and Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) programs. These include two GREAT awards granted to InfinityLink Communications and Lumos, as well as two CAB awards granted to Spectrum and Brightspeed. Collectively, these investments are intended to support the deployment of fiber-based broadband infrastructure to 2,127 households and 62 businesses in unserved and underserved areas of the county.

Adoption

Digital equity remains a significant challenge in Wayne County, particularly for immigrant populations, low-income families, and rural residents. In terms of adoption, 66.54% of households maintain a broadband subscription, while 13.4% report having no internet access. Data from the Digital Opportunity Survey, supported by findings from community listening sessions, indicate that affordability and unavailability of service are the primary barriers to broadband adoption. Residents identified an average of $69 per month as an affordable cost for home internet and reported using the internet primarily to access information on government services, public health resources, and recreation. However, several social and structural barriers further limit adoption. Language barriers hinder broadband engagement among the growing Haitian Creole and Hispanic communities, as few translators or multilingual materials are available to support access. Additionally, fear of using public institutions, particularly among some immigrant residents, reduces participation in broadband programs and use of library resources. Even where free or low-cost Wi-Fi is available, a lack of digital literacy prevents many residents from fully benefiting from connectivity. Participants emphasized the need for greater outreach, communication, and awareness to ensure residents know about available broadband programs and affordable service options.

What is preventing you from accessing the internet?

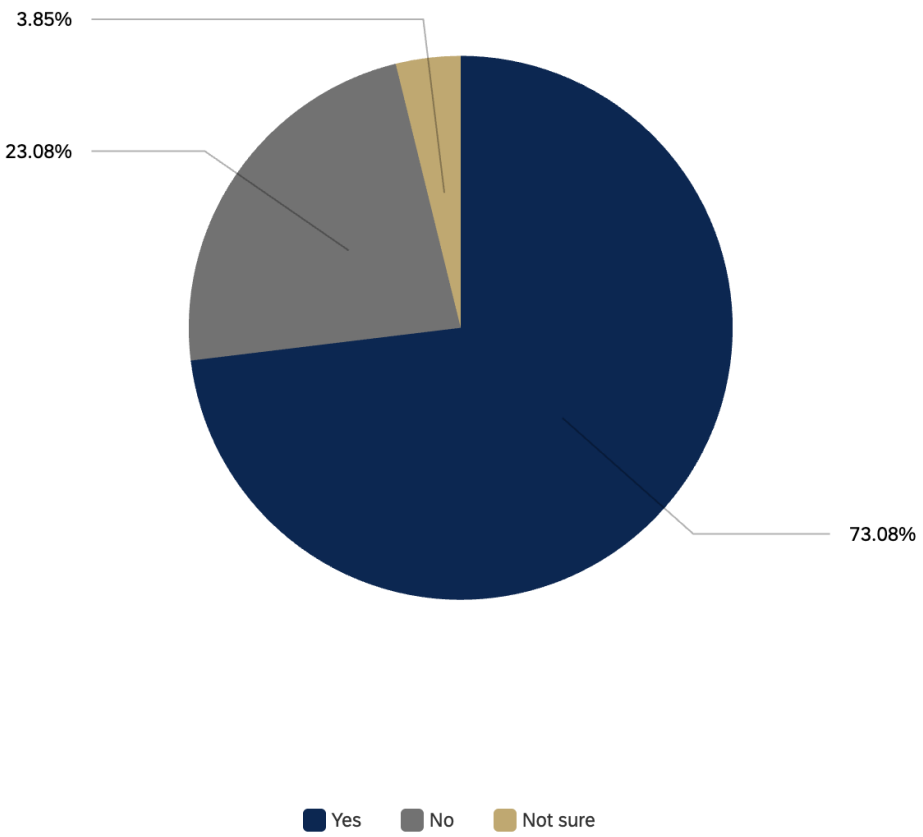


Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

Device Access

Reliable access to digital devices is essential for Wayne County residents to participate fully in education, employment, and community life. Data from the Broadband Adoption Index show that 10.47% of households lack computer devices, meaning a notable share of families have no desktop, laptop, or tablet at home. This gap continues to limit opportunities for students and workers who rely on technology for school assignments, job searches, and accessing online services. Results from the North Carolina Digital Opportunity Survey reflect similar trends. When asked whether their household had enough working devices to meet everyone's needs, 73.08% of respondents said yes, (23.08%) said no, and (3.85%) were not sure. These numbers suggest that roughly one in four households experiences some form of device shortage or depends on shared or outdated technology.

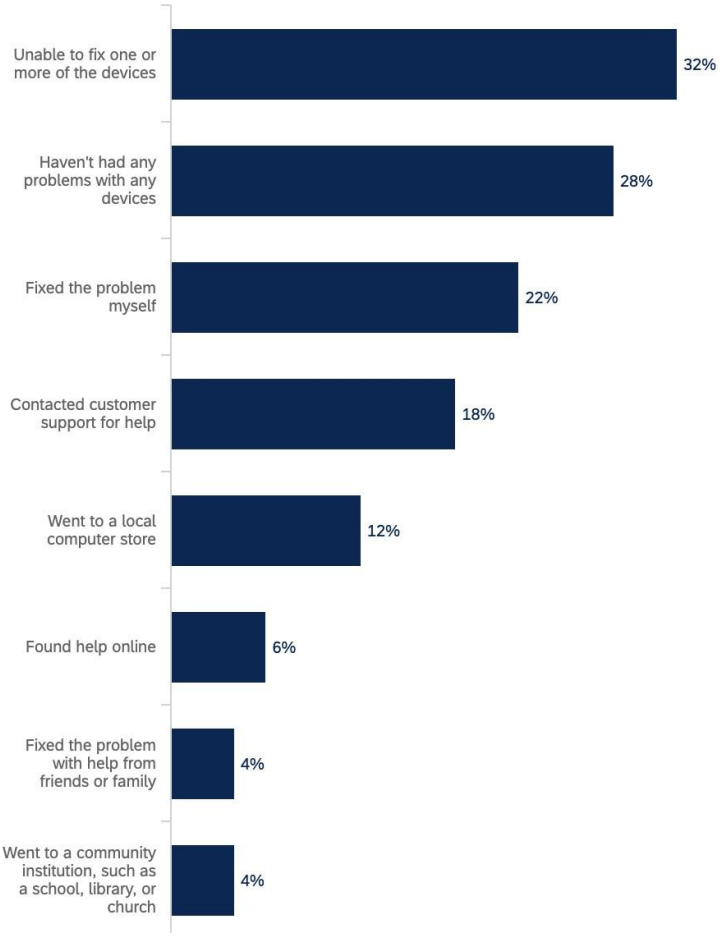
Does your household have enough working digital devices (computers, smart phones, tablets) available to meet the needs of everyone living in this home? (n=64)



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

Device functionality and repair also remain barriers. Seventy-two percent of respondents reported having problems with their devices within six months of completing the survey. The most common response was being unable to fix the device (32%), followed by trying to repair it themselves (22%) or contacting customer support (18%). Only 4% sought help from community institutions such as schools, libraries, or churches, indicating that residents may not be aware of or able to access local technical support options.

In the past 6 months, if one of your digital devices failed to function, broke, or stopped working properly how did you deal with the problem you encountered? (Select all that apply)



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

The listening session provided deeper insight into how residents use and manage digital devices across different groups in the county. Migrant workers, particularly Haitian residents, rely almost entirely on smartphones for communication and internet access. Many use WhatsApp to connect with family abroad, but their ability to stay online is often constrained by the use of prepaid phones or limited data plans and no access to the internet without a data plan (no Wi-Fi opt in).

Across households more broadly, families reported having televisions, phones, laptops, and gaming systems, though connectivity and reliability issues limit consistent use. Students often depend on school-issued Chromebooks, but access and quality vary by school. Some classrooms still lack Chromebooks altogether, and many existing devices are aging or slow due to poor connectivity. Teachers noted that while some assignments require computer use, they often avoid assigning homework that depends on technology because not all students have devices or reliable internet at home.

Listening session participants identified several critical needs related to device access and quality. Schools require funding to replace end-of-life Chromebooks and expand take-home technology

options so that every student can complete digital assignments outside of school hours. Families would also benefit from affordable or free device-distribution programs to ensure that students and adults alike have the tools they need for learning and employment. In addition, residents called for affordable or free public printing options, since the current pay-per-page model at libraries and other institutions can be prohibitive for those with limited incomes.

Digital Literacy

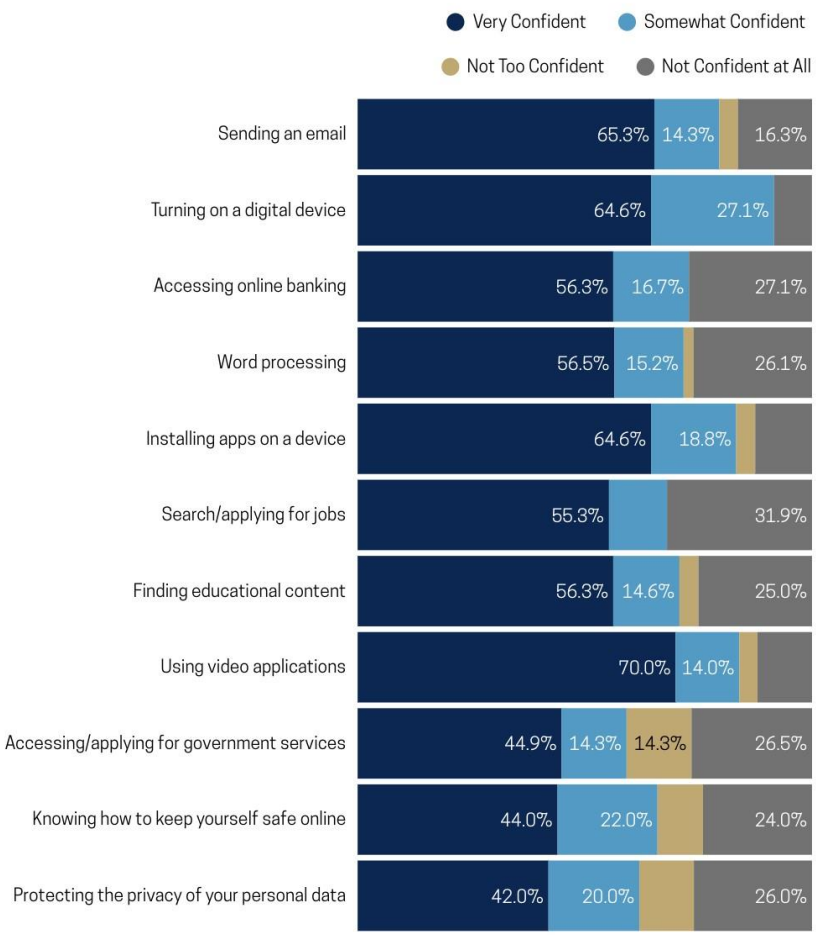
The listening session and the Digital Opportunity Survey revealed that Wayne County residents face ongoing challenges with basic digital literacy, even as technology becomes more integrated into daily life. Participants described a community where younger residents are gaining exposure to advanced digital tools through schools, while many adults continue to struggle with essential computer skills. One participant noted that "schools focus on advanced skills like coding without ensuring basic digital literacy for students," highlighting a gap between advanced learning opportunities and foundational technology use.

Residents emphasized that many adults lack basic computer navigation and typing skills, and that schools and community programs should place greater emphasis on these fundamentals. One participant observed that "schools are taking out the basics of how to use the computers," a concern that reflects the need for renewed investment in digital literacy education at all levels. Limited digital skills among adults also affect parents' ability to support their children's digital learning. Several participants described feelings of shame or embarrassment when asking for help, suggesting that programs must create judgment-free environments where residents can learn comfortably.

The listening session also highlighted the importance of language accessibility and cultural inclusion. Participants shared that some farmworkers and residents with limited English proficiency face additional barriers to accessing and using digital tools. They recommended that technology programs and resources be offered in multiple languages to ensure all residents can participate. Participants also called for tailored, beginner-friendly training sessions to build confidence, reduce fear of scams, and encourage safe and effective use of digital technologies.

Findings from the Digital Opportunity Survey reinforce these insights. While a majority of respondents reported confidence with basic tasks such as sending emails (71%) and turning on a device (70%), confidence declined as tasks became more complex. The lowest confidence levels were reported in protecting the privacy of personal data (35.6% not confident or somewhat confident), knowing how to keep oneself safe online (31%), and accessing or applying for government services (34.7%). Moderate challenges were also seen in accessing online banking (29.7%), searching or applying for jobs (26.9%), and using video applications such as Zoom or FaceTime (27%).

How confident are you in your abilities for each of the following tasks?



Source: 2023 NC Digital Opportunity Survey

County Assets

Wayne County benefits from a growing network of community-based access points that offer critical entryways to internet connectivity. The Wayne County Public Library system plays a central role by providing public Wi-Fi, computer access, low-cost printing, and basic technology support through a team of trained staff and designated digital navigators. Although translation services are limited, the library remains a trusted hub for residents seeking help with digital tasks.

Senior services are another important component of the county's digital access network. The Peggy M. Seegars Senior Center offers free computer and Wi-Fi access through an on-site computer lab, low-cost printing, and structured digital skills support. Services include six-week beginner and intermediate computer classes at no cost, as well as a weekly Smart Device Clinic that provides one-on-one assistance with cell phones, laptops, and other personal devices. These services offer older adults accessible, hands-on support in a familiar and trusted setting.

The Wayne County Community College also offers a variety of Continuing Adult Education Courses on Computer Programs at a cost for residents. These include courses such as. Introduction to Computers, Microsoft Suite, Cybersecurity, among others. Additional free public Wi-Fi is available at locations such as Downtown Goldsboro, Wayne County Services on Aging, and select Public Housing Authority properties. However, some residents report that Wi-Fi access in public housing is often unreliable and poor in quality, highlighting a need for infrastructure improvements.

Libraries, senior centers, churches, and schools throughout the county also provide Wi-Fi access, tutoring, and limited digital services, making them important community anchors for residents who rely on shared access points. These institutions represent opportunities for deeper investment in reliable connectivity and expanded programming, particularly in underserved neighborhoods. Strengthening and coordinating these local access points will help ensure more equitable and consistent digital access across Wayne County.

Appendices

Appendix A: Broadband and Device Access Across Counties

County	Broadband Subscription	No internet Access	Household without computer devices
Carteret	78.7%	7.5%	5.83%
Craven	73.5%	17 %	15.44%
Duplin	51.8%	26.1%	15.44%
Greene	40.96%	20.5%	12.54%
Lenoir	52.98%	17.83%	13.12%
Jones	50.2%	27.52%	17.41%
Pamlico	64.51%	18.01%	12.03%
Onslow	77.96%	7.14%	4.17%
Wayne	66.54%	13.4%	10.47%

Source: NC OneMap

Appendix B: Assets and Gap Inventory

In this section, you will catalogue your community's unique assets. This can be a mix of hard assets (i.e., computer labs, downtown Wi-Fi, and hotspot lending programs) and soft assets—the people, organizations, digital skills/literacy training that are unique to your community.

Carteret County				
Asset	**Type**	**Find Digital Skills Help and Classes**	**Find a Public Computer or Wi-Fi**	**Get a Computer or Device**
Webb Memorial Library and Civic Center	Library			✔
West Carteret High	K-12		✔	
Western Carteret Library	Library	✔	✔	
White Oak Elementary	K-12	✔		
Carteret Senior Services Center	Seniors	✔		
Carteret Regional Library System	Library	✔		
Carteret Department of Social Services	Other		✔	
Carteret County Public Schools	K-12			✔
Carteret Community College	Higher Ed		✔	
Down East Middle/Smyrna Elementary	K-12		✔	
Down East Public Library	Library	✔	✔	
Harkers Island Elementary	K-12	✔	✔	
NCWorks Career Center Carteret	Other	✔	✔	
Newport Middle School	K-12	✔	✔	
Newport Public Library	Library		✔	
Atlantic Elementary	K-12	✔		
Beaufort Elementary	K-12	✔	✔	

Bogue Banks Public Library	Library	✔	✔	
Broad Creek Middle	K-12	✔	✔	
Calico Creek Coffee Shop at one Harbor Church	Other		✔	
Kramden Institute	Other			✔
Carteret Correctional Facility	State	✔	✔	
Pearse Memorial Library, Duke University Marine Laboratory	Library		✔	
The Carteret County Partnership for Children	State	✔		
AARP Fraud Watch Network	Other	✔		
Agricultural Workers Digital Equity Initiative	Other	✔		✔
ECU Health	Other	✔	✔	
Our Journey	Other	✔		✔

Craven County				
Asset	**Type**	**Find Digital Skills Help and Classes**	**Find a Public Computer or Wi-Fi**	**Get a Computer or Device**
Cove City-Craven County Public Library	Library	✔	✔	
Havelock-Craven County Public	Library	✔	✔	
Cprl Book/Tech Mobile	Other	✔	✔	
New Bern-Craven County Public Library	Library	✔	✔	
Vanceboro-Craven County Public Library	Library	✔	✔	
New Bern Riverfront Convention Center	Other		✔	
Peletah Ministries	Other	✔		✔
Craven-Pamlico Regional Library (CPRL)	Library	✔		✔
Craven County Schools - NC Student Connect Park and Learn	K-12		✔	
Craven County Senior Services	Seniors	✔		
Craven County Community College	Higher Ed		✔	
AARP Fraud Watch Network	Other	✔		
Agricultural Workers Digital Equity Initiative	Other	✔		✔
ECU Health	Other	✔	✔	
NC Office of Rural Health	State	✔		✔
NC Department of Health & Human Service- NC Assistive Technology Program	State	✔		✔
Our Journey	Other	✔		✔

ECU - Digital Bridges Program	Other	✔		✔

Duplin County				
Asset	**Type**	**Find Digital Skills Help and Classes**	**Find a Public Computer or Wi-Fi**	**Get a Computer or Device**
Duplin County Senior Center	Seniors	✔	✔	
Beulaville Town Hall	Other		✔	
Calypso Volunteer Fire Department	Other		✔	
City of Magnolia	Other		✔	
Dorothy Wightman Library	Library		✔	
Duplin County Public Libraries	Library		✔	
Duplin County Schools	K-12			✔
Emily S. Hill Library (Now The Faison Library & Museum)	Library		✔	
Faison Recreation and Wellness Center	Other		✔	
Florence Gallier Library	Library		✔	
James Sprunt Community College	Higher Ed	✔	✔	
Kramden Institute	Other			✔
Phillip Leff Memorial Library.	Library		✔	
Rose Hill Community Memorial Library	Library		✔	
Snow Hill Free Will Baptist Church	Other		✔	
University of Mount Olive Agriculture Building	Higher Ed		✔	
Warsaw-Kornegay Library	Library		✔	

Greene County				
Asset	**Type**	**Find Digital Skills Help and Classes**	**Find a Public Computer or Wi-Fi**	**Get a Computer or Device**
Maury Correctional Institution	Other	✔		
Lenoir Community College	Higher Ed	✔		
Greene County Senior Center	Seniors	✔	✔	
Greene County Library	Library	✔	✔	

Jones County				
Asset	**Type**	**Find Digital Skills Help and Classes**	**Find a Public Computer or Wi-Fi**	**Get a Computer or Device**
Jones County Senior Center	Seniors	✔	✔	
Lenoir Community College	Higher Ed	✔		
Comfort Branch Library	Library	✔	✔	
Maysville Branch Library	Library	✔	✔	
Pollocksville Branch Library	Library	✔	✔	
Trenton Branch Library	Library	✔	✔	

Lenoir County				
Asset	**Type**	**Find Digital Skills Help and Classes**	**Find a Public Computer or Wi-Fi**	**Get a Computer or Device**
NCField, Inc.	Other	✔		
Neuse Regional Libraries	Library	✔	✔	
Lenoir Community College	Higher Ed	✔		
Kinston Teens	Other	✔	✔	✔
Kinston Community Health Center	Other		✔	
Nrl Digital Resource Rover	Other	✔	✔	
Kinston-Lenoir County Public Library	Library	✔	✔	
La Grange Branch Library	Library	✔	✔	
Pink Hill Branch Library	Library	✔	✔	

Onslow County				
Asset	**Type**	**Find Digital Skills Help and Classes**	**Find a Public Computer or Wi-Fi**	**Get a Computer or Device**
Onslow Public Library	Library	✔	✔	
Coastal Carolina Community College	Higher Ed	✔	✔	
Jacksonville Main Library	Library		✔	
Onslow Community Outreach	Other		✔	
Roots	Other	✔		
Kramden Institute	Other			✔
NCWorks Career Center	Other	✔	✔	
Onslow County Schools	K-12			✔
Onslow County Senior Services	Seniors	✔	✔	
Richlands Branch Library	Library	✔	✔	
Sneads Ferry Branch Library	Library		✔	
Swansboro Branch Library	Library		✔	

Pamlico County				
Asset	**Type**	**Find Digital Skills Help and Classes**	**Find a Public Computer or Wi-Fi**	**Get a Computer or Device**
Pamlico Correctional Institution	Other	✔		
Pamlico County Senior Services	Seniors	✔	✔	
Marybelle Hollowell Annex	Library	✔	✔	
Pamlico County Library	Library	✔	✔	

Wayne County				
Asset	**Type**	**Find Digital Skills Help and Classes**	**Find a Public Computer or Wi-Fi**	**Get a Computer or Device**
Peggy M. Seegars Senior Center	Seniors	✔	✔	
Wayne County Public Library	Library	✔	✔	
HV Brown Center (Dillard Alumni)	Other	✔	✔	
Downtown Goldsboro	Other		✔	
Housing Authority of the City of Goldsboro	State	✔	✔	
Parr Family Learning Center (WAGES in Dudley)	Other		✔	
Literacy Connection of Wayne County	Other	✔		
Wayne County Services on Aging	Seniors	✔	✔	
University of Mount Olive (Moye Library)	Higher Ed		✔	
Wayne County Community College	Other	✔		

Appendix C: Listening Session Policy Briefs

The following policy briefs were developed in response to community feedback sessions held in nine counties within the Eastern Carolina Council (ECC) region. These sessions included a diverse group of community members from across the region. Their needs and recommendations were woven into the Eastern Carolina Council Digital Inclusion Plan and will help guide this work moving forward. Each policy brief is hyperlinked below.

1. Carteret County
2. Craven County
3. Duplin County
4. Greene County
5. Jones County
6. Lenoir County
7. Onslow County
8. Pamlico County
9. Wayne County