

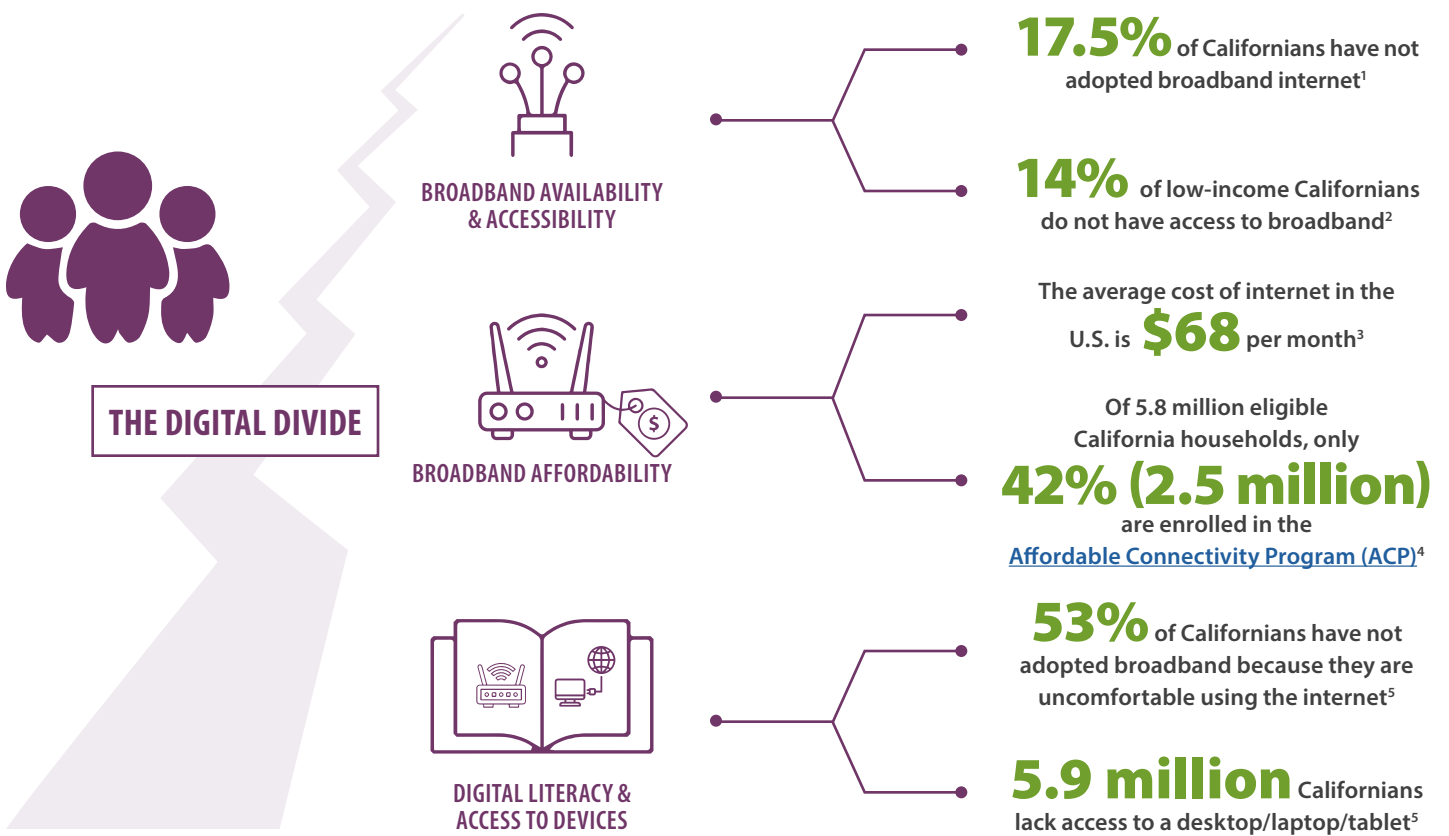
Snapshot: Addressing Digital Equity for Equitable and Accessible Health Care

SEPTEMBER 2023

During the onset of the pandemic, non-critical health care turned entirely online for all Californians, opening the door for many flexibilities in telehealth policy. A lack of broadband and connectivity made telehealth inaccessible for many California communities. As health care becomes increasingly reliant on technology, broadband is the nexus in making the future of health care equitable and accessible for communities historically lacking in care. Telehealth, virtual care, health information exchange, and future technology innovations all require broadband and connectivity. See [ITUP's Digital Equity and Broadband Issue Brief](#) for more details.

THE PROBLEM

If barriers to broadband access and connectivity in California are not addressed, digital and health inequities will deepen, thus creating wider health disparity gaps for already disadvantaged communities. The future of health, rooted in innovative technology and virtual care options, depends on equitable solutions that bridge the digital divide.



THE OPPORTUNITY

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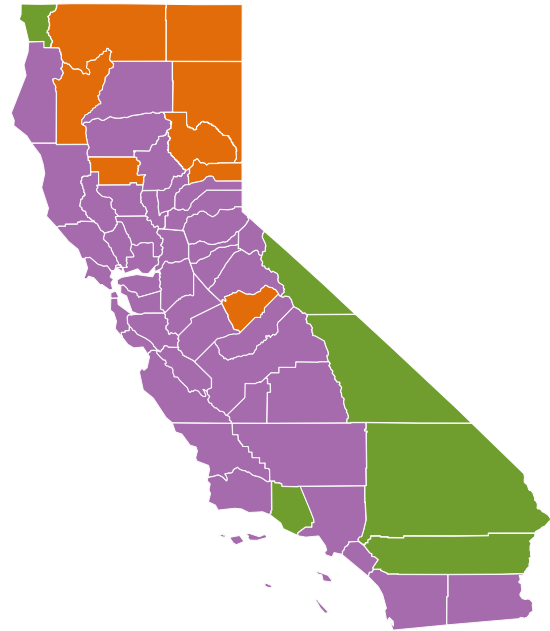
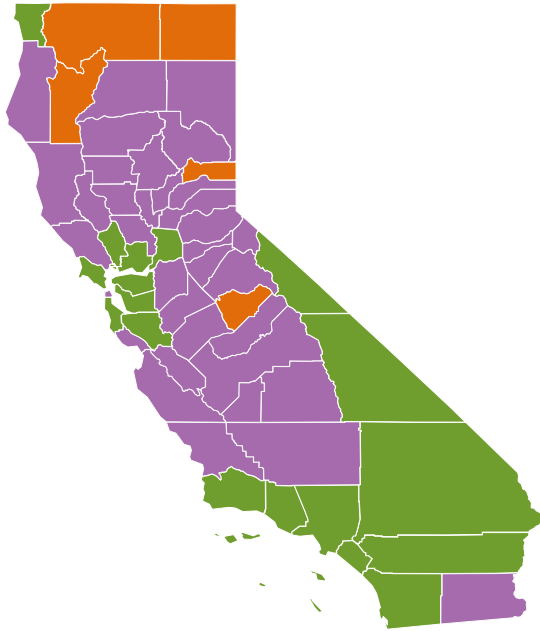
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Historic, One-Time \$6 Billion Investment in Broadband⁶

 Policy Change Making Telehealth a Permanent Health Care Delivery Tool in Medi-Cal⁷

 Opportunity for More Accessible Health Care and Better Health Outcomes

Broadband Adoption by 25/3 Mbps⁸ (Federal Standards) **Broadband Adoption by 100 Mbps⁸ Down* (Sufficient Broadband Speeds)**



25/3 Mbps

	Number	Percent
Counties w/ 0-25.99% Adoption	5	9%
Counties w/ 26-79.99% Adoption	35	60%
Counties w/ 80%+ Adoption	18	31%

100 Mbps Down

	Number	Percent
Counties w/ 0-25.99% Adoption	11	19%
Counties w/ 26-79.99% Adoption	41	72%
Counties w/ 80%+ Adoption	6	10%

CPUC uses 2021 data reported from internet service providers and FCC June 2022 deployment, despite new data being released in May 2023.⁹
 *Down or Download speed is referred to as the rate at which the user’s device can receive data from the internet.¹⁰

BROADBAND ISSUE SPOTLIGHT: BETTER DATA FOR IDENTIFYING DIGITAL BARRIERS TO HEALTH

EQUITY ISSUES IN BROADBAND DATA

Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are the sole source of broadband access reporting to the state.

The inability to determine which patients need digital literacy or devices for telehealth from available data.

Federal standard of speeds at 25/3 Megabits per second (Mbps) is too slow for the broadband needs of Californians.

Transparency of pricing data is not required.



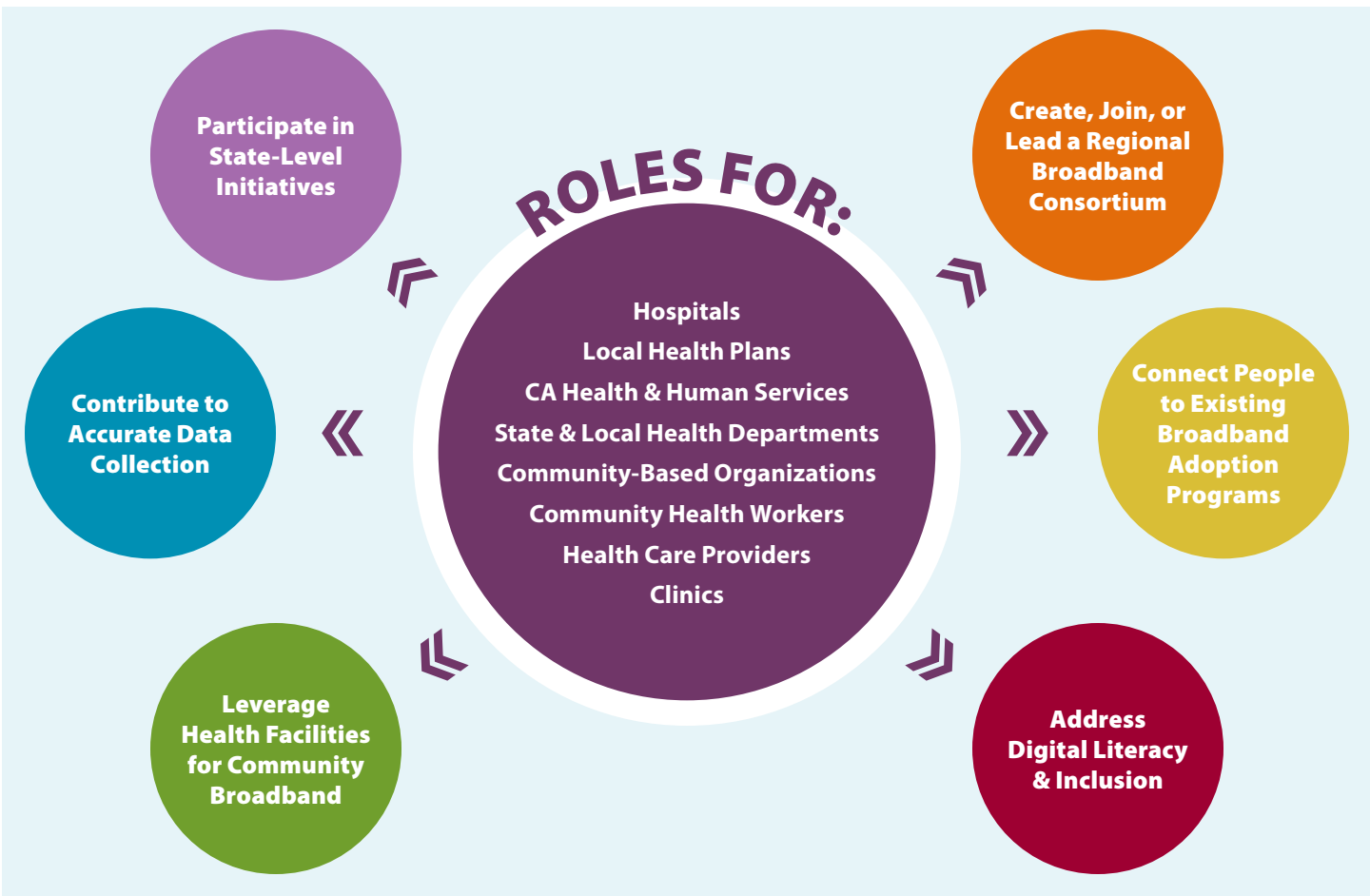
SOLUTIONS

Incorporating sources of data beyond ISP-reported data to ensure that broadband access maps accurately reflect the digital disparities across the state.

Include questions on broadband access, devices, and digital literacy in health care screenings and intake forms to better understand patients’ digital barriers to accessing health care.

Increase broadband speed standards to be sufficient for individuals to fully participate in virtual health care, school, and society.

Require price transparency data to be reported and publicly available to better understand the impacts of digital redlining and affordability on access to broadband.



ENGAGING AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL

Engaging at both the state and local level will speed up our journey to equitable health access via broadband availability.

STATE

- Follow and engage with the [California Broadband for All Initiative](#)
- Participate in [California Broadband Council \(CBC\)](#) and [Middle-Mile Advisory Committee \(MMAC\)](#) stakeholder meetings
- Join [State Digital Equity Planning \(SDEP\)](#) meeting
- See [ITUP's Broadband Bootcamp Report](#) for highlighted findings that will be used to inform the SDEP
- Provide oral and/or written public comments on [California Public Utilities Commission \(CPUC\)](#) rulemaking proceedings
- Provide input and challenges to the [CPUC's Broadband Availability maps](#)

LOCAL

- Create, lead, or join a [local consortium](#)
- Outreach to connect communities with digital literacy and device resources
- Assist eligible household Medi-Cal members in applying for the [ACP](#)
- Download [ITUP's ACP Enrollment Flyer](#) to share with your communities.
- Serve as a [community anchor institution](#)
- Provide input and challenges to the [CPUC's Broadband Availability maps](#)

For updates to engage on broadband and digital equity in California, visit ITUP's [Broadband and Connectivity Work](#) webpage.

Endnotes

1. CA Public Utilities Commission, [EOY 2020 CA Fixed Broadband by Households](#), Accessed: August 16, 2023.
2. Starr, D., Hayes, J., Gao, N., Public Policy Institute of California, [California's Digital Divide, June 2023](#), Accessed: August 16, 2023.
3. Hayes, J., Gao, N., Starr, D., Gong Liu, A. Public Policy Institute of California, [Achieving Universal Broadband](#), March 2023, Accessed: August 16, 2023.
4. California Broadband for All, [Affordable Connectivity Program Enrollment Tracker](#), September 2023, Accessed: September 8, 2023.
5. University of Southern California, [Statewide Broadband Adoption Survey 2021 Results](#), Accessed July 7, 2023.
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7. Department of Health Care Services, [Medicine: Telehealth](#) (January 2023), Accessed: April 20, 2023.
8. California Public Utilities Commission, [EOY 2020 CA Fixed Broadband Adoptions by Households](#), Accessed: August 16, 2023.
9. Federal Funding Account, [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) Federal Funding Account, Last Mile](#), April 2023, Accessed: August 16, 2023.
10. Supan, J., [Upload vs download speed: What's the difference?](#), Allconnect Resource Center, February 2023, Accessed: September 12, 2023.

About ITUP

ITUP is an independent, nonprofit, health policy institute that has been a central voice in the California health policy landscape for more than two decades. ITUP serves as a trusted expert, grounded in statewide and regional connections with a network of policymakers, health care leaders, and stakeholders. The mission of ITUP is to promote innovative and workable policy solutions that expand health care access and improve the health of all Californians.

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- California Health Care Foundation
- The California Endowment
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