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New York City Comptroller  
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[www.comptroller.nyc.gov](http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov)

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POLICY BRIEF

# INTERNET INEQUALITY: BROADBAND ACCESS IN NYC

**UPDATE!**





Access to the Internet is the fourth utility of the modern age—as central to our daily lives as electricity, gas, and water. And yet, for millions of New Yorkers, high-speed internet and the connections it facilitates to education, employment, culture, and commerce, lie beyond their reach.

In 2013, for the first time in its history, the Census Bureau asked questions about computer ownership and Internet access as part of its American Community Survey (ACS). The Office of Comptroller Scott M. Stringer analyzed the data and published, “Internet Inequality,” a report detailing the scope of the digital divide across New York City.<sup>1</sup>

This report provides an update to that effort, using the latest data released this month from the 2014 ACS. The update comes as regulators at the state and federal level are reviewing the proposed merger of Charter Communications and Time Warner Cable to determine whether the merger is in the public interest.

Once again, the data shows that millions of New Yorkers do not have computers and/or broadband at home, and that there are disparities based on age, education level, employment status, race and neighborhood.

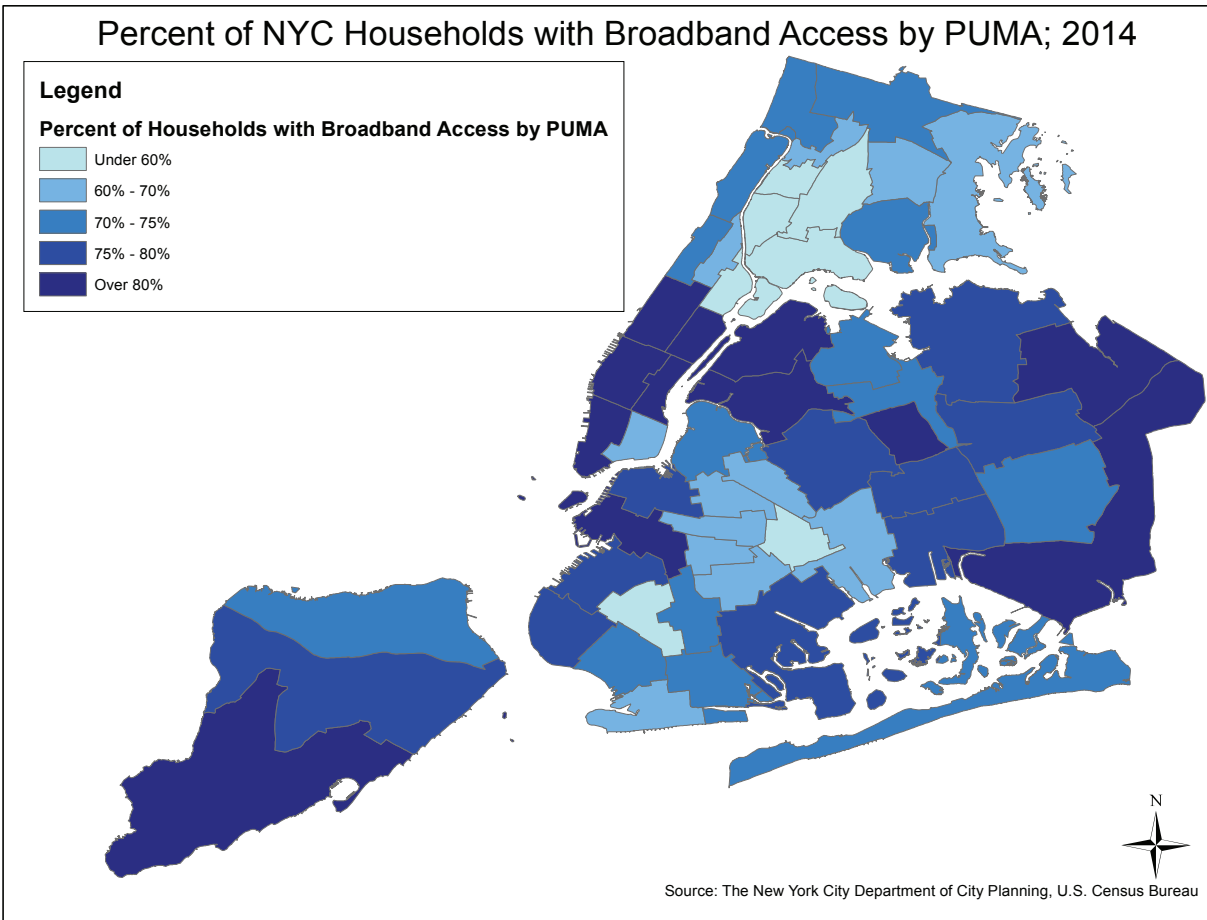
More troubling, a comparison of broadband access between 2013 and 2014 suggests that the digital divide is actually widening in certain neighborhoods, even as the City engages in innovative efforts to bring high-speed access to every corner of the five boroughs.

- 26 percent (813,000) of NYC households lack broadband Internet at home.<sup>2</sup>
- 16 percent (510,000) of NYC households do not even have a computer at home.<sup>3</sup>
- Nearly 350,000 (20 percent) NYC youth (0-18 years) lack broadband at home, while 448,000 (42 percent) of seniors (65+) lack broadband.
- 40 percent of those with less than a high school education lack broadband at home compared to 11 percent of those with a bachelors or more.
- 32 percent of people outside the workforce lack broadband at home, while 21 percent of unemployed New Yorkers lack access, and 15 percent of employed New Yorkers.
- 27 and 25 percent of Hispanic and Black New Yorkers, respectively, lack broadband at home, compared to 19 percent of White households and 14 percent of Asian households.
- More than one-third (35 percent) of households in the Bronx lack broadband at home, compared to 29 percent in Brooklyn, 22 percent in Queens, 21 percent in Staten Island and Manhattan.
- The 15<sup>th</sup> Congressional District (Bronx) had the highest percentage of households without broadband at 40 percent, while the 12<sup>th</sup> Congressional District (Upper East Side/Queens) has the fewest households without broadband at 15 percent.



- As shown in the map below, more than 40 percent of households in the South Bronx (Bronx Community Districts 1-6), East Harlem (Manhattan Community District 11), Borough Park (Brooklyn Community District 12), and Brownsville (Brooklyn Community District 16) lack broadband at home.

At the same time, only 10-12 percent of households lack broadband in Park Slope (Brooklyn Community District 6), the Upper West and Upper East Sides of Manhattan (Manhattan Community Districts 7 and 8), and Battery Park City/Greenwich Village (Manhattan Community Districts 1 and 2).

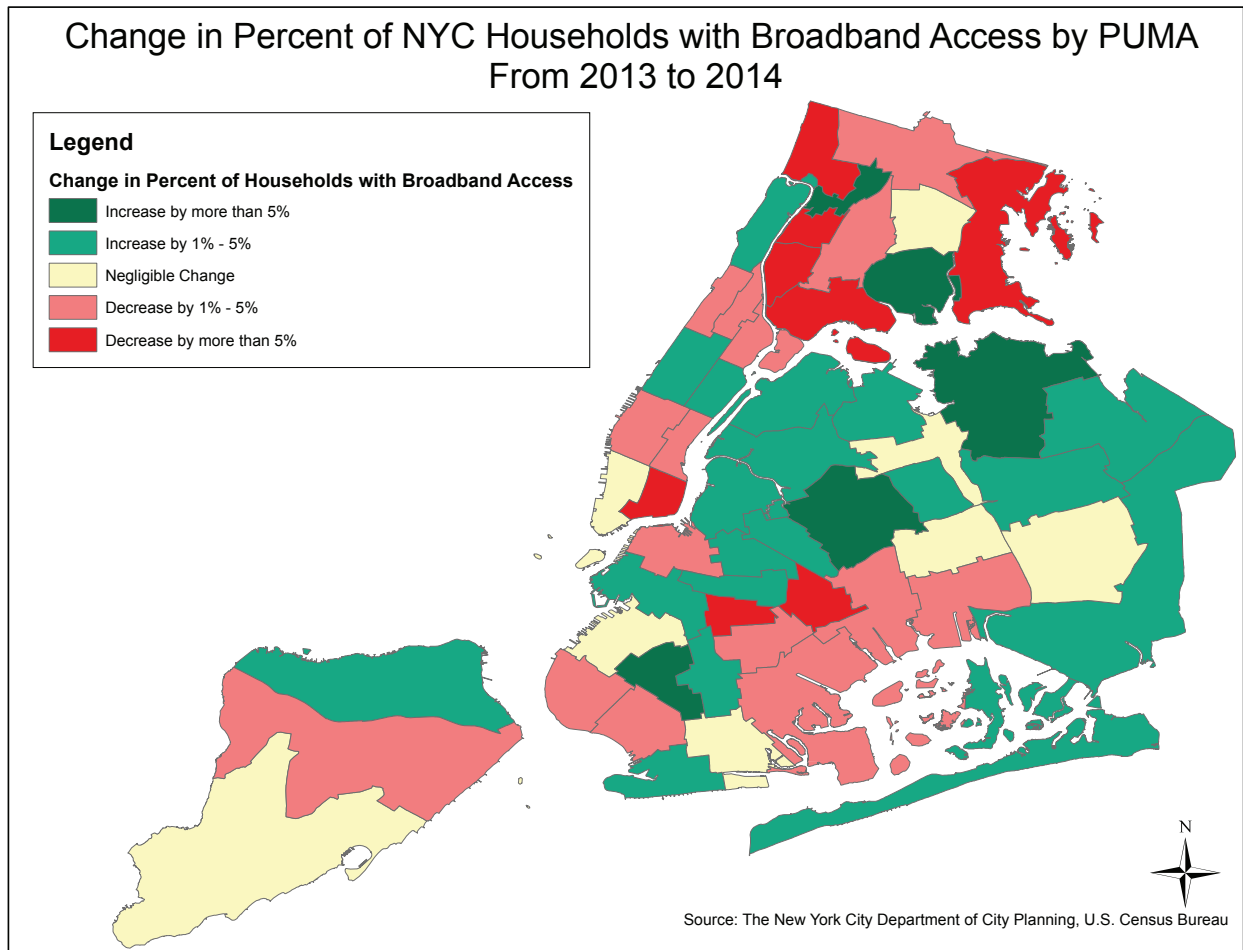


More troubling still is that the digital divide appears to be growing on a year over year basis, with poor neighborhoods of the South Bronx and Central and Eastern Brooklyn witnessing a decrease in the percentage of households with broadband, as shown in the following map.

In Community Districts 1-6 in the South Bronx—covering neighborhoods such as Hunts Point, Longwood, Belmont, Concourse, Morris Heights, and East Tremont—the percent of households with a broadband connection fell from between 60-68 percent in 2013 to between 58-59 percent in 2014.

In Manhattan’s Lower East Side, the percentage of households with broadband fell from 67 percent in 2013 to 62 percent in 2014.

And in Brownsville (Brooklyn Community Board 16), the percentage of households with broadband fell from 61 percent in 2013 to 55 percent in 2014.



While *access* to broadband is often divided upon socioeconomic lines, the truth is that *no* neighborhood is immune from poor internet. From Tribeca to Tompkinsville, the Upper East Side to East Flatbush, the South Bronx to Sheepshead Bay, communities across the city and throughout the state are affected by poor broadband.

Despite the fact that the FCC recently redefined “high-speed” broadband to be at least 25 megabits per second (Mbps)<sup>4</sup>, the latest data from the FCC shows that, as of December 31, 2013, over 20 percent of connections in New York State are below 3 Mbps and nearly half are below 10 Mbps.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, cities across the country—from Chattanooga and Lafayette to Kansas City and Austin—have engaged in transformative public-private partnerships that have brought gigabit speeds within reach of millions and provided quality service at affordable prices even for low-income Americans.

While New York City has taken meaningful steps to expand access to high-speed service, including an ambitious plan to transform old phone booths into interactive WiFi kiosks with gigabit speeds, more can and must be done by both public and private sectors to combat internet inequality throughout the five boroughs.<sup>6</sup>

APPENDIX<sup>7</sup>*City Totals*

	New York City
	Estimate
Total:	3,148,067
Has a computer:	2,638,209
With dial-up Internet subscription alone	10,795
With a broadband Internet subscription	2,334,742
Without an Internet subscription	292,672
No computer	509,858

*Type of Internet Service at Home*

	New York City
	Estimate
Total:	3,148,067
With an Internet subscription:	2,373,613
Dial-up alone	11,424
DSL:	185,226
With mobile broadband	60,442
Without mobile broadband	124,784
Cable modem:	1,385,547
With mobile broadband	488,297
Without mobile broadband	897,250
Fiber-optic:	367,011
With mobile broadband	136,186
Without mobile broadband	230,825
Satellite Internet service:	22,836
With mobile broadband	8,878
Without mobile broadband	13,958
Two or more fixed broadband types, or other:	309,718
With mobile broadband	177,947
Without mobile broadband	131,771
Mobile broadband alone or with dialup	91,851
Internet access without a subscription	111,567
No Internet access	662,887

*Age*

	New York City
	Estimate
Total:	8,313,491
Under 18 years:	1,781,770
Has a computer:	1,632,336
With dial-up Internet subscription alone	4,554
With a broadband Internet subscription	1,432,199
Without an Internet subscription	195,583
No computer	149,434
18 to 64 years:	5,476,764
Has a computer:	5,015,926
With dial-up Internet subscription alone	16,788
With a broadband Internet subscription	4,507,916
Without an Internet subscription	491,222
No computer	460,838
65 years and over:	1,054,957
Has a computer:	701,631
With dial-up Internet subscription alone	6,392
With a broadband Internet subscription	606,681
Without an Internet subscription	88,558
No computer	353,326

*Education Level*

	New York City
	Estimate
Total:	5,767,093
Less than high school graduate or equivalency:	1,100,888
Has a computer:	794,403
With dial-up Internet subscription alone	4,485
With a broadband Internet subscription	659,141
Without an Internet subscription	130,777
No computer	306,485
High school graduate (includes equivalency) , some college or associate's degree :	2,569,422
Has a computer:	2,196,094
With dial-up Internet subscription alone	9,590



	New York City
	Estimate
With a broadband Internet subscription	1,928,874
Without an Internet subscription	257,630
No computer	373,328
Bachelor's degree or higher:	2,096,783
Has a computer:	2,009,090
With dial-up Internet subscription alone	6,106
With a broadband Internet subscription	1,885,502
Without an Internet subscription	117,482
No computer	87,693

***Employment Status***

	New York City
	Estimate
Total:	6,716,215
In the civilian labor force:	4,317,650
Employed:	3,970,416
Has a computer:	3,704,359
With dial-up Internet subscription alone	12,534
With a broadband Internet subscription	3,367,736
Without an Internet subscription	324,089
No computer	266,057
Unemployed:	347,234
Has a computer:	317,742
With dial-up Internet subscription alone	1,148
With a broadband Internet subscription	275,440
Without an Internet subscription	41,154
No computer	29,492
Not in labor force:	2,398,565
Has a computer:	1,868,869
With dial-up Internet subscription alone	10,150
With a broadband Internet subscription	1,624,222
Without an Internet subscription	234,497
No computer	529,696

***Race*****White**

	New York City
	Estimate
Total:	3,540,944
Has a computer:	3,175,270
With dial-up Internet subscription alone	12,205
With a broadband Internet subscription	2,877,743
Without an Internet subscription	285,322
No Computer	365,674

**Black**

	New York City
	Estimate
Total:	2,016,989
Has a computer:	1,750,224
With dial-up Internet subscription alone	8,315
With a broadband Internet subscription	1,512,168
Without an Internet subscription	229,741
No Computer	266,765

**Asian**

	New York City
	Estimate
Total:	1,159,661
Has a computer:	1,068,389
With dial-up Internet subscription alone	4,422
With a broadband Internet subscription	998,114
Without an Internet subscription	65,853
No Computer	91,272

**Hispanic**

	New York City
	Estimate
Total:	2,421,914
Has a computer:	2,060,629
With dial-up Internet subscription alone	5,162
With a broadband Internet subscription	1,775,663
Without an Internet subscription	279,804
No Computer	361,285



***Borough***

	The Bronx	Queens	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Staten Island
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Total:	492,481	942,402	762,228	785,985	164,971
Has a computer:	390,462	772,812	666,110	667,482	141,343
With dial-up Internet subscription alone	1,500	3,411	2,187	3,474	223
With a broadband Internet subscription	320,380	670,287	603,903	610,419	129,753
Without an Internet subscription	68,582	99,114	60,020	53,589	11,367
No computer	102,019	169,590	96,118	118,503	23,628

***Congressional District***

<b>Percent of households with broadband connection at home</b>	
Congressional District 4 (113th Congress)	84.1
Congressional District 5 (113th Congress)	76.1
Congressional District 6 (113th Congress)	78.9
Congressional District 7 (113th Congress)	70.1
Congressional District 8 (113th Congress)	68.1
Congressional District 9 (113th Congress)	72.1
Congressional District 10 (113th Congress)	81.3
Congressional District 11 (113th Congress)	77.0
Congressional District 12 (113th Congress)	85.0
Congressional District 13 (113th Congress)	67.4
Congressional District 14 (113th Congress)	74.5
Congressional District 15 (113th Congress)	60.1
Congressional District 16 (113th Congress)	76.2

***Community District***

<b>Percent of households with broadband connection at home</b>	
NYC-Bronx Community District 8--Riverdale, Fieldston & Kingsbridge PUMA	73.1
NYC-Bronx Community District 12--Wakefield, Williamsbridge & Woodlawn PUMA	70.1
NYC-Bronx Community District 10--Co-op City, Pelham Bay & Schuylerville PUMA	68.7
NYC-Bronx Community District 11--Pelham Parkway, Morris Park & Laconia PUMA	69.6
NYC-Bronx Community District 3 & 6--Belmont, Crotona Park East & East Tremont PUMA	58.0
NYC-Bronx Community District 7--Bedford Park, Fordham North & Norwood PUMA	65.7
NYC-Bronx Community District 5--Morris Heights, Fordham South & Mount Hope PUMA	57.7
NYC-Bronx Community District 4--Concourse, Highbridge & Mount Eden PUMA	58.4
NYC-Bronx Community District 9--Castle Hill, Clason Point & Parkchester PUMA	70.7
NYC-Bronx Community District 1 & 2--Hunts Point, Longwood & Melrose PUMA	59.3
NYC-Manhattan Community District 12--Washington Heights, Inwood & Marble Hill PUMA	74.4
NYC-Manhattan Community District 9--Hamilton Heights, Manhattanville & West Harlem PUMA	73.2



Percent of households with broadband connection at home	
NYC-Manhattan Community District 10--Central Harlem PUMA	62.9
NYC-Manhattan Community District 11--East Harlem PUMA	59.6
NYC-Manhattan Community District 8--Upper East Side PUMA	89.6
NYC-Manhattan Community District 7--Upper West Side & West Side PUMA	87.9
NYC-Manhattan Community District 4 & 5--Chelsea, Clinton & Midtown Business District PUMA	84.3
NYC-Manhattan Community District 6--Murray Hill, Gramercy & Stuyvesant Town PUMA	86.8
NYC-Manhattan Community District 3--Chinatown & Lower East Side PUMA	61.7
NYC-Manhattan Community District 1 & 2--Battery Park City, Greenwich Village & Soho PUMA	88.5
NYC-Staten Island Community District 3--Tottenville, Great Kills & Annadale PUMA	84.9
NYC-Staten Island Community District 2--New Springville & South Beach PUMA	76.0
NYC-Staten Island Community District 1--Port Richmond, Stapleton & Mariner's Harbor PUMA	74.7
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 1--Greenpoint & Williamsburg PUMA	73.3
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 4--Bushwick PUMA	69.0
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 3--Bedford-Stuyvesant PUMA	64.4
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 2--Brooklyn Heights & Fort Greene PUMA	79.3
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 6--Park Slope, Carroll Gardens & Red Hook PUMA	88.8
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 8--Crown Heights North & Prospect Heights PUMA	68.4
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 16--Brownsville & Ocean Hill PUMA	55.1
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 5--East New York & Starrett City PUMA	66.6
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 18--Canarsie & Flatlands PUMA	76.5
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 17--East Flatbush, Farragut & Rugby PUMA	69.0
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 9--Crown Heights South, Prospect Lefferts & Wingate PUMA	67.9
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 7--Sunset Park & Windsor Terrace PUMA	77.3
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 10--Bay Ridge & Dyker Heights PUMA	76.7
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 12--Borough Park, Kensington & Ocean Parkway PUMA	59.9
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 14--Flatbush & Midwood PUMA	71.2
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 15--Sheepshead Bay, Gerritsen Beach & Homecrest PUMA	74.2
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 11--Bensonhurst & Bath Beach PUMA	73.0
NYC-Brooklyn Community District 13--Brighton Beach & Coney Island PUMA	61.1
NYC-Queens Community District 1--Astoria & Long Island City PUMA	80.2
NYC-Queens Community District 3--Jackson Heights & North Corona PUMA	71.4
NYC-Queens Community District 7--Flushing, Murray Hill & Whitestone PUMA	75.9
NYC-Queens Community District 11--Bayside, Douglaston & Little Neck PUMA	86.0
NYC-Queens Community District 13--Queens Village, Cambria Heights & Rosedale PUMA	82.2
NYC-Queens Community District 8--Briarwood, Fresh Meadows & Hillcrest PUMA	79.1
NYC-Queens Community District 4--Elmhurst & South Corona PUMA	72.3
NYC-Queens Community District 6--Forest Hills & Rego Park PUMA	80.7
NYC-Queens Community District 2--Sunnyside & Woodside PUMA	83.4
NYC-Queens Community District 5--Ridgewood, Glendale & Middle Village PUMA	79.4
NYC-Queens Community District 9--Richmond Hill & Woodhaven PUMA	79.0
NYC-Queens Community District 12--Jamaica, Hollis & St. Albans PUMA	71.0
NYC-Queens Community District 10--Howard Beach & Ozone Park PUMA	78.1
NYC-Queens Community District 14--Far Rockaway, Breezy Point & Broad Channel PUMA	70.6

## ENDNOTES

1. [https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Internet\\_Inequality.pdf](https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Internet_Inequality.pdf).
2. The ACS defines “broadband” as internet service *other than* dial-up service, including digital subscriber line (DSL), cable modem, fiber-optic, mobile broadband, and satellite service.
3. The ACS defines “computer” as including desktops, laptops, netbooks, notebook computers, handheld computers, smart mobile phones, and other handheld wireless computers. It does *not* include GPS devices, digital music players, or other electronic devices with “limited computing capabilities,” such as smart appliances.
4. <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-finds-us-broadband-deployment-not-keeping-pace>.
5. [https://transition.fcc.gov/Daily\\_Releases/Daily\\_Business/2014/db1016/DOC-329973A1.pdf](https://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2014/db1016/DOC-329973A1.pdf).
6. <http://www.link.nyc/>.
7. All data is drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2014 American Community Survey. These estimates are calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau based on American Community Survey responses. Margins of error differ according to the item and geography shown.



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