PAR Snapshot
Broadband Usage in Louisiana
COVID Hospitalizations Steadily Increasing

Louisiana's Broadband Obstacles: Cost and Infrastructure

Broadband internet affordability appears to be the leading cause of Louisiana's digital divide.

Broadband, short for broad bandwidth, transmits data from the internet to devices at high speeds. At minimum, broadband connections have a download speed of at least 25 megabits per second and an upload speed of at least three megabits per second. Fast internet connection makes services such as video calling, public alert systems and remote learning possible.
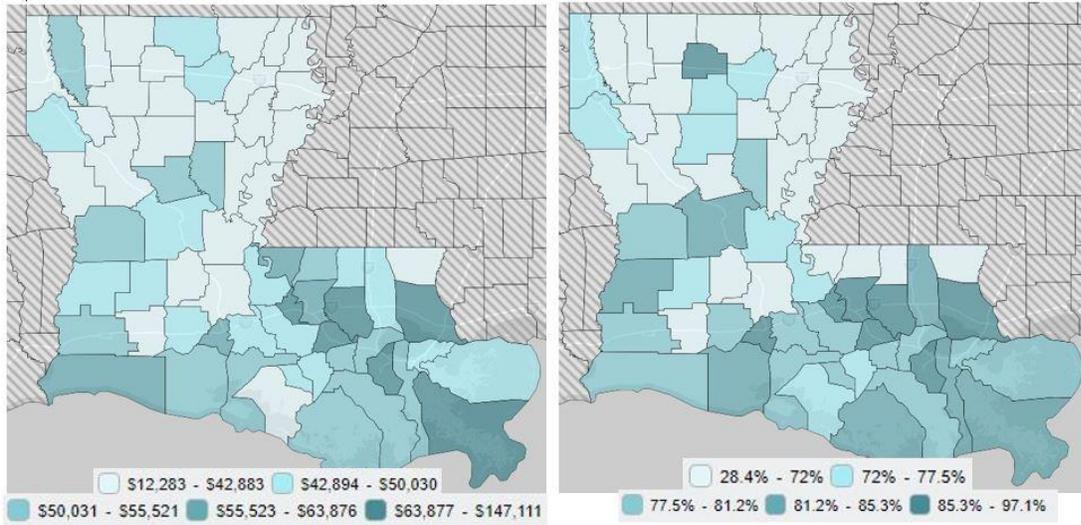
In Louisiana, 20% of adults do not have broadband connection at home while 6% have an internet service not considered broadband, according to a recent poll by the LSU Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs. Almost two-thirds of those without a broadband subscription said cost is the biggest hurdle to fast internet connection.

BroadbandNow says nearly seven in ten Louisiana residents are unable to purchase broadband at a price of $60 per month or less.

The U.S. Census Bureau recorded median household income and household broadband internet usage in 2020. Comparing this data, most parishes with lower median household income also have fewer households with a broadband service. This is most prominent in northeast Louisiana.

Median Household Income in 2020 Dollars   **Households with a Broadband Internet Subscription**

Legend (left map): $12,283 - $42,883 | $42,894 - $50,030 | $50,031 - $55,521 | $55,523 - $63,876 | $63,877 - $147,111

Legend (right map): 28.4% - 72% | 72% - 77.5% | 77.5% - 81.2% | 81.2% - 85.3% | 85.3% - 97.1%
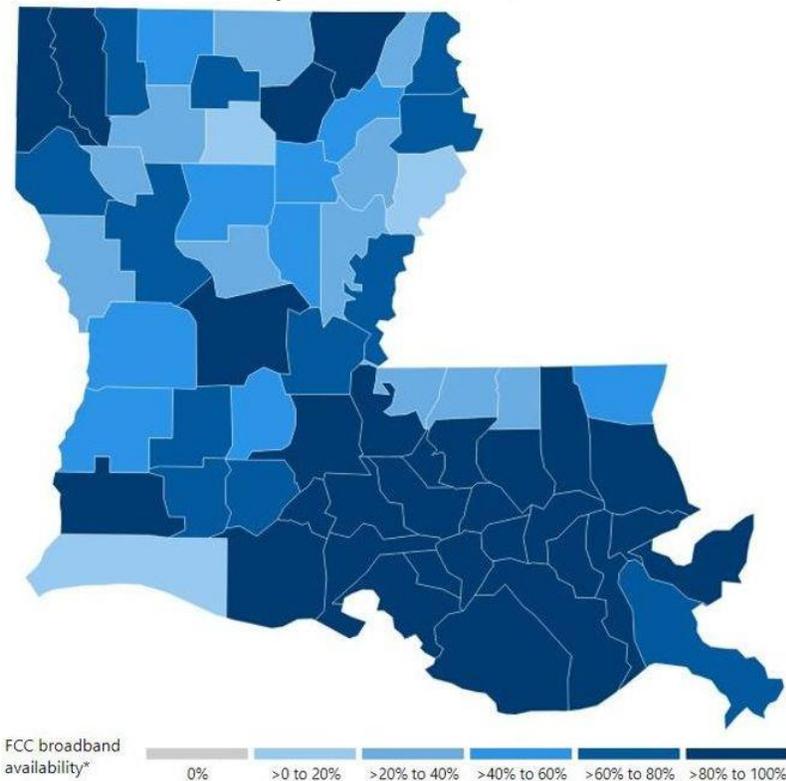
Source: U.S. Census Bureau / 2016-2020 American Community Survey

While cost is a significant issue for most Louisianans, broadband internet infrastructure and access also serve as barriers.

Broadband services are available to 40% or less of the residents in fourteen parishes, according to the Federal Communications Commission. In three of those parishes, broadband access is even worse, available to only 20% or fewer of residents.

Broadband Availability in Louisiana, 2019

FCC broadband availability*   0%   >0 to 20%   >20% to 40%   >40% to 60%   >60% to 80%   >80% to 100%

Source: Microsoft / Federal Communications Commission Broadband

Broadband is unavailable to roughly half a million, or 538,000 residents in Louisiana, according to the FCC. Despite this, Microsoft reports about 2.6 million of the state's more than 4.6 million residents do not use high-speed services.

When comparing the above maps, most parishes with low broadband usage also have low median household incomes. However, there are a few exceptions where parish median household incomes are comparably higher, for example, in Grant Parish and Cameron Parish. There, infrastructure is lacking.

Initiatives to Bridge the Digital Divide in Louisiana and the U.S.

Louisiana has an Office of Broadband Development and Connectivity working to alleviate the digital divide. Lawmakers have steered millions in federal pandemic aid to the office to expand access, and millions more will be available through the federal bipartisan infrastructure law passed by Congress. The office's goal is to increase digital literacy, make broadband more accessible to tech deserts and reduce the cost of high-speed internet. More on the state's work can be found at connect.la.gov.

National initiatives passed by Congress are also pushing to close the gap. The federal Affordability Connectivity Program helps pay up to $30 a month for internet service to eligible households.
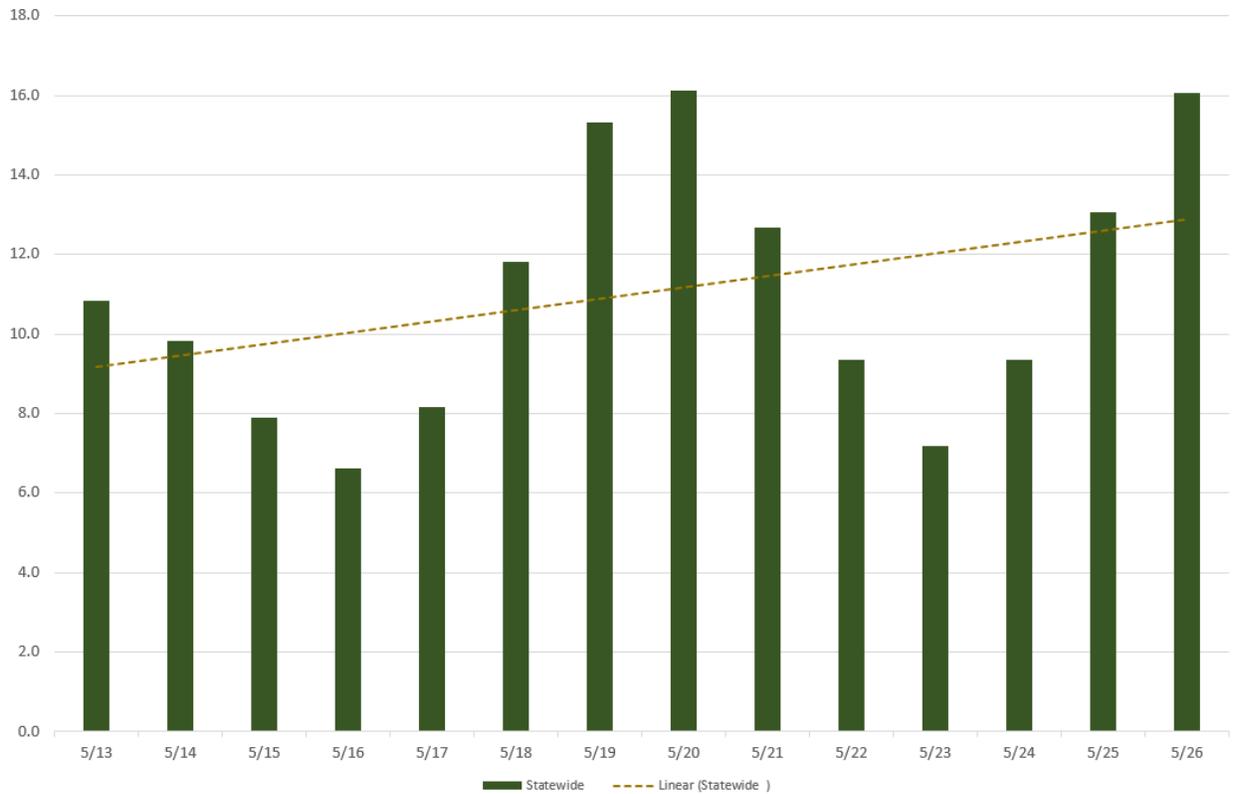
COVID-19 Update
COVID Hospitalizations Steadily Increasing
Statewide Case Rate at 16 per 100,000
746 New Confirmed Cases | 4 New Confirmed Deaths

The Louisiana Department of Health reported 746 confirmed cases out of 10,732 tests on May 26. The three-day positivity rate was 7.3%. There are approximately 1.55 patients in Louisiana hospitals with COVID-19 per 100,000 residents. LDH reported 4 confirmed deaths.

Statewide COVID Trends- INCREASING

Confirmed cases are increasing statewide.

The graphs in this report show the number of new cases per 100,000 residents over a 14-day period, which is a method used by the state. By calculating the cases according to population in this way, the results from region to region are easier to compare to determine the severity of the outbreak.

Region	5/24/2022	5/25/2022	5/26/2022
Orleans	—	▼	▲
Capital	▲	▲	▲
Bayou	▲	▲	▲
Lafayette	▲	▲	▲
Lake Charles	—	—	▲
Central	—	—	—
Shreveport	—	—	▲
Monroe	▼	—	—
Northshore	▲	▲	▲
Statewide	▲	▲	▲

Decreasing	Increasing	Plateau
▼	▲	—

PAR uses an average of new cases over a three-day period to smooth out irregularities that could be related to reporting inconsistencies (LDH also uses multiple-day averaging). Then, a statistically derived trendline – in the form of a straight line – is fitted to the data to gauge whether cases are increasing, decreasing or have reached a plateau, according to the CDC definition for each.

These figures are based only on known cases. Some studies indicate that the number of people who have carried COVID-19 is far greater than the number who have taken the test and shown a positive result. An unknown but potentially large number of people have been infected but are asymptomatic and have not been tested. Others have taken at-home tests, and their positive results haven't necessarily been reported to the state.

Special thanks to the Union Pacific Foundation for supporting PAR's Louisiana Recovery Project.