

A Connection for All Ages: Enabling the Benefits of High-Speed Internet Access for Older Adults

Christopher A. Baker
AARP Public Policy Institute

Recent surveys show that many older adults do not have a high-speed Internet connection at home. This is a problem in today's digital world because high-speed connectivity enables a new generation of applications and services with vast potential to create opportunities and benefits for older adults. This report describes how these emerging technologies, enabled by high-speed connectivity, can support older adults across key areas of life.

The report reviews specific initiatives identified by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in its 2010 National Broadband Plan to reduce the barriers that many older adults face in adopting and using high-speed Internet access. Evaluating their implementation, the report suggests that progress so far has been slow and uncertain:

- Most older adults are ineligible for two major FCC initiatives to make broadband more affordable (Connect2Compete and the low-income broadband pilot program).
 - The FCC and the National Institute on Aging have yet to act on the key recommendation in the plan that specifically targets older adults.
 - The FCC's outdated definition of broadband includes slow Internet connections that limit users to basic Internet applications.
 - Key recommendations to track implementation of the plan remain unaddressed.
- The U.S. Department of Commerce launched digitalliteracy.gov to share resources that impart digital skills, but the impact of this effort remains unclear.



In Brief IB 203, March 2013.
A synopsis of the AARP Public Policy Institute *Insight on the Issues*, number 79. Reprinting with permission only. © 2013, AARP. AARP Public Policy Institute
www.aarp.org/ppi. ppi@aarpp.org