

BACKGROUND

North Carolina's top internet providers are AT&T Internet, Spectrum, CenturyLink, SuddenLink, Xinfintiy, and Frontier. In total, there are 168 internet providers dependent on the city or region. The average speed is 38.3 Mbps. Still, there are 468,000 North Carolinians who do not have access to a wired connection capable of 25 Mbps download speeds. Even greater, there are 914,000 North Carolinians who have access to only one wired provider. Without the ability to switch, residents are left at the mercy of their sole provider. Finally, an estimated 125,000 North Carolinians lack access to any wired internet providers (BroadbandNow, 2019). Rural areas generally have limited competition and lower broadband speeds because of the higher industry entrance costs and lower population density being more spread out. With the support of government subsidies, monopolies have formed in rural or low-income areas. In 2015, only 12% of North Carolinians in rural areas had multiple services to choose from that provided sufficient broadband at 25 Mbps. In order to highlight the importance of broadband in-state development, the North Carolina Broadband Plan was published. The report highlights the economic impact of broadband in educational achievement and increased effective healthcare among other industries citing specific regional case studies. Each case highlights key stakeholders and how different demographic groups are impacted lacking connectivity.