

Report Finds Strong Link Between Broadband and Population Growth

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U.S. counties lacking high-speed broadband have lower population growth and are more likely to see population decline than counties where high-speed broadband is available, according to new research conducted by Broadband Communities Magazine. [Counties with the highest broadband availability levels are seeing the greatest population growth](#), researchers said.



The benchmark broadband data rate was 25 Mbps. “Access to 25 Mbps service is a realistic indicator that a household or business can use most available broadband applications,” researchers said.

Population trends are closely related to employment and other economic trends, researchers note. For example, areas growing in population tend to have higher employment rates and vice versa.

Broadband and population growth

Broadband Communities researchers studied all 3,144 U.S. counties. Counties in the bottom half of their states for access to 25 Mbps had an average population growth of only .27% from 2010 through 2013, researchers found. The top half grew at more than ten times that amount – about 2.8%.

And when the top 10% of counties in their states, measured by broadband availability, were compared with the bottom 10%, the differences were even more pronounced. Counties in the top 10% saw an average 3.2% population increase, while counties in the bottom 10% saw a population decrease of .55%.

The obvious question, of course, is whether the low-ranking counties have low population growth because they lack good broadband or if, instead, they lack good broadband because they have low population growth. The researchers note that they have had conversations with county officials on this topic and that those conversations indicated that both dynamics are in play.

Using a statistical analysis, Broadband Communities noted that access to good broadband could account for nearly 10% of the population change seen – “quite a lot for a single variable,” researchers said.

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