

Report: 75% of Rural Dwellers Say Broadband Important to Quality of Life

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Three out of four rural residents say having high-speed Internet at home is important to maintaining their quality of life, according to a recent survey of 800 rural residents conducted by the [NetAmerica Alliance](#) and shared with Telecompetitor.

The survey also found that nearly nine in 10 rural residents believe that local access to well-performing technology is economically vital, while two-thirds of respondents say access to the Internet for communications and entertainment plays a major role in allowing them to live in a non-metro area.



I got these results just a couple of days after I had a sobering conversation with respected [financial analyst Mike Balhoff](#), who made a compelling case for why he does not believe policymakers are making sufficient funding available to make broadband available to all Americans. By his analysis, there will actually be less funding available to complete the nation's broadband build than is currently available to support universal voice service.

If Balhoff's concerns are correct, we may find that incumbent carriers decline to provide service to some unserved high-cost areas and that no one bids in reverse auctions to take the incumbents' place. If so, any areas that remain unserved run the risk of decline as residents move to areas where they can get broadband.

The NetAmerica research certainly underscores the idea that if plans for universal broadband were to fail, many residents of unserved rural areas would indeed migrate to where broadband is available.

NetAmerica also did focus groups with rural residents, who made comments such as "Would I stay in a town like this after I graduate? Probably not without the Internet." Or "Making it so people can stay where they're at and get the benefits of a big city. That would be huge."

High-speed 4G wireless could help fill in the gap – at least for some time or for some people, NetAmerica's research suggests. Three in five rural residents have heard of 4G or 4G LTE, and the numbers are higher in the younger generation. Nearly 80% of respondents aged 18 to 29 and more than two-thirds of people aged 30 to 49 had heard of 4G or 4G LTE.

Three in five respondents said they would subscribe to 4G if it were available. And half of respondents said the Internet is important when they are mobile.

Other highlights of the NetAmerica research:

- 92% of rural residents prefer to do business locally
- 89% of rural residents feel a responsibility to help make their community a better place to live
- 72% and 73% of rural residents aged 30 to 49 own a desktop or laptop computer, respectively.
- Even among those 65 years and older, desktop computer ownership is 59% and laptop computer ownership is 44%.
- Fueling interest in 4G are "faster browsing and downloading speeds," cited by 59% of respondents, followed by "improved content streaming" (25%).

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