



Digital Access and Literacy Update

Information Technology Committee

Karla Bruce, Chief Equity Officer, Fairfax County
Jessica Hudson, Library Director, Fairfax County
Gregory Scott, Chief Information Officer, Fairfax County
Gautam Sethi, Chief Information Officer, FCPS

June 15, 2021



Digital Access and Literacy Workgroup

Broadband Access - Availability + Affordability

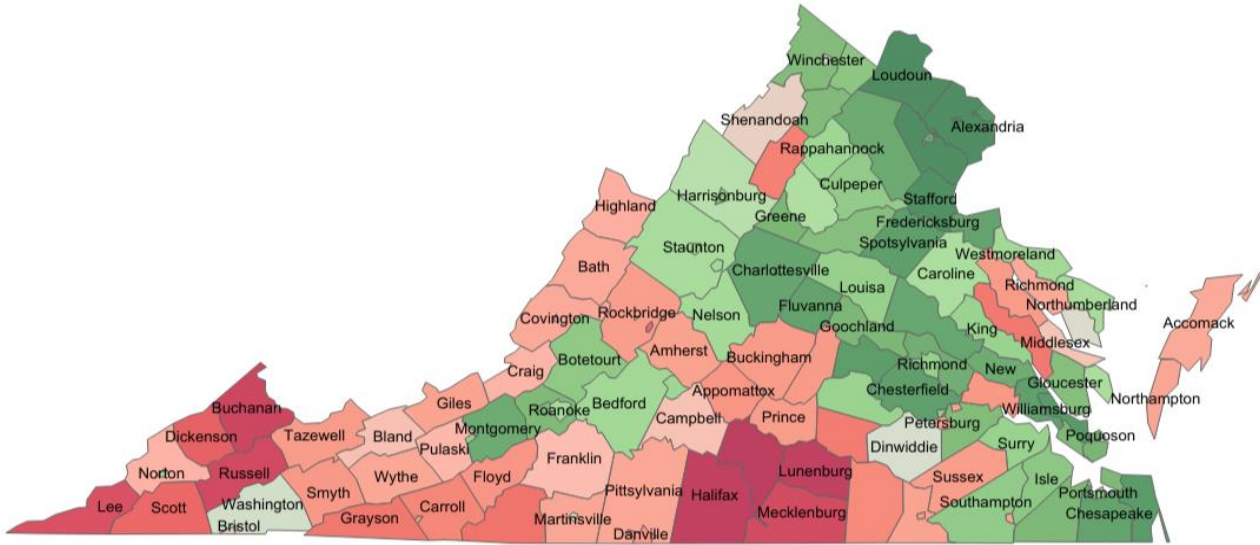
- Digital Access and Literacy was identified as an *Area of Focus* in the One Fairfax Policy
- A cross-agency workgroup found that broadband **infrastructure** is not a significant issue for Fairfax County overall
 - **Wireline:** Almost all locations in the County have access to service from two providers (Verizon, and Cox or Comcast).
 - **Wireless:** Cellular service is robust throughout most of the County and will continue to improve.
- Broadband **access** is a challenge for households in certain areas of the County and in certain living situations
 - **Affordability** and **Awareness**
 - **A targeted and collective approach necessary** to address issues

Technology Gap Map

How deep is the technology gap in our nation and your state and county?

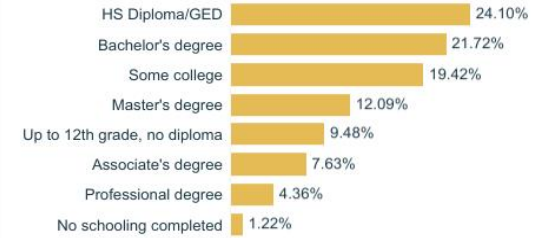
Virginia - % of households with					Select Device Ownership: No Computer
More than One Device 76.29%	Desktop or Laptop Only 8.21%	Smartphone Only 4.66%	Tablet Only 0.62%	No Computer 10.13%	

Select states and/or counties to filter population and demographic data

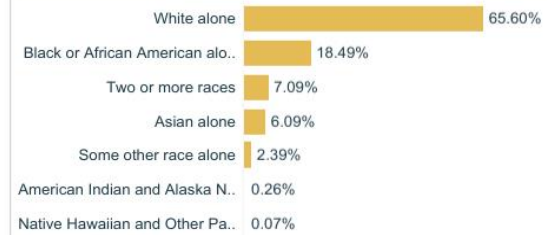


Virginia Population: 8,413,774

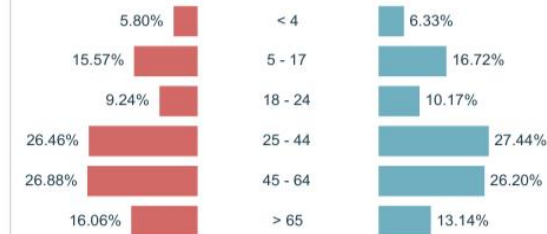
Educational Attainment



Race



Gender and Age

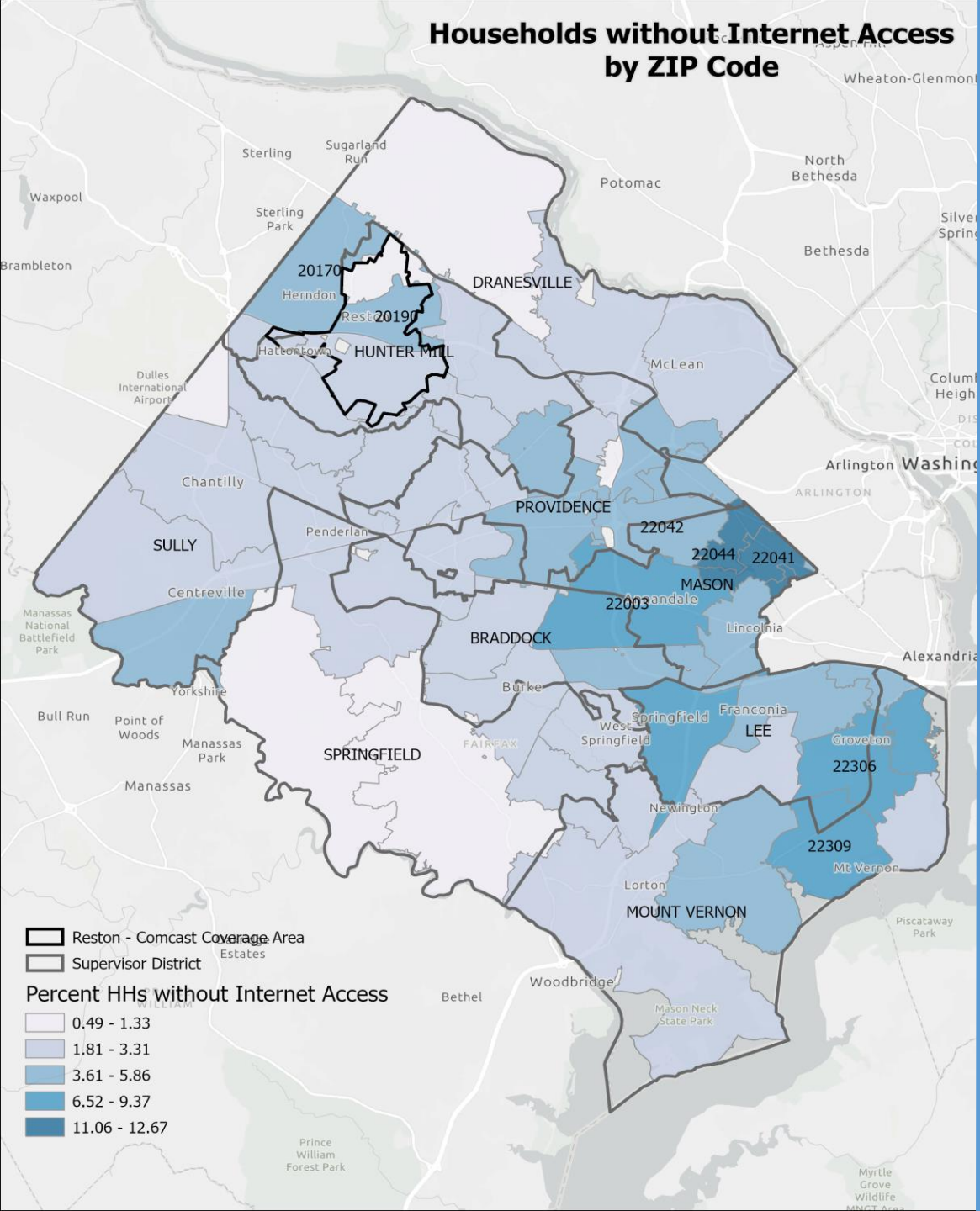


When looking across the Commonwealth, Fairfax seems to be doing well on the technology gap scale.

However, there are specific areas of the County where digital infrastructure and access are more constrained.

Citation: Digitunity, *Digitunity Tech Gaps Maps DMV*

Households without Internet Access by ZIP Code



While 4% percent of households in Fairfax County overall do not have internet access, the percentage of households without internet access in select zip codes within Supervisor Districts is significantly higher.

Percentage of households without internet access by Supervisor District (ACS 2015-2019 5-year estimates)

- Fairfax County Overall** – 4.2%
- Mason** – 8.9%
- Lee** – 6.8%
- Providence** – 3.8%
- Mount Vernon** – 3.8%
- Braddock** – 3.5%
- Hunter Mill** – 3.4%
- Dranesville** – 3.1%
- Sully** – 2.6%
- Springfield** – 1.4%

Percentage of households without internet in select zip codes within Supervisor Districts (ACS 2013-2017 5-year estimates)

- Dranesville (Herndon, 20170)** – 6.2%
- Mount Vernon (Route 1, 22306)** – 17.5%
- Mount Vernon (Route 1, 22309)** – 14.9%
- Mason/Braddock (Annandale, 22003)** – 10.6%
- Mason (Seven Corners, 22041)** – 18.8%
- Mason (Seven Corners, 22042)** – 9.9%
- Mason (Seven Corners, 22044)** – 20.8%
- Hunter Mill (Reston, 20190)** – 10.7%



Digital Equity Defined

*“**Digital equity** ensures opportunities for Fairfax County residents to participate and engage in a connected community. The ability to access, understand and use digital tools is essential for many tasks in modern life, including applying for jobs, paying bills, enjoying recreational activities, completing homework, staying informed and connecting with government/community services.”*

In Fairfax County, the ideal state of digital equity means:

1. Affordable digital hardware and connections
2. Awareness of digital resources and services
3. Access to specific digital tools
4. Advancement of digital literacy skills



Issues/Implications Related to COVID-19

There are issues across the county with bandwidth usage and associated costs but **existing digital inequities were accentuated by COVID-19**

- Access barriers
 - Affordability
 - Hardware and Connections
 - Digital Literacy
 - Technical Support
- Awareness of resources and information
 - Eligibility
 - Trust
- Digital Access and Literacy needs vary by population
 - Students, families, and adults (including seniors)
 - Educational, Workforce Development, "Assistance from a Distance," Telehealth, Maintaining Social Networks



DAL Updates: **Fairfax County**

- Neighborhood & Community Services (NCS) and Fairfax County Public Library (FCPL) are the county's primary vehicles for public access
 - NCS reopened all 10 after school tech centers and community centers
 - FCPL is implementing a program for checking out Chromebooks
 - Both agencies are providing virtual programming for youth and adults
- NCS is conducting a countywide analysis of center Wi-Fi capabilities
- FCPL expanded spill over wireless hours at libraries
- NCS and FCPL contributed to PPE production utilizing 3D printers and other technology
- Housing and Community Development/Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RHA) is conducting a site analysis to address connectivity barriers



DAL Updates: **FCPS SY 2020-21 Efforts**

ACCESS/SUPPORT:

- Prior to SY 2020 start, refreshed and distributed **80,000 available laptops** to students
- During SY 2020 **purchased** and distributed **additional 90,000 new laptops** for grade 3 - 8 students
- Acquired additional MiFi hotspot devices, distributing more than **7,300 cellular connections to households**
- Leveraged partnership with Cox Communications increasing access to **subsidize long term low-cost wired internet connections**, received approval for 530 household connections from COX
- Leveraged cable channels to provide **more than 500 language arts and math lessons** for use by students with access challenges
- Set up a **Parent Technology Help Desk** with after-hours assistance for parents and students to **navigate at home tech issues**
- Conducted **summer workshops for parents** to walk them through log-in and navigation of online learning tools



Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB)

Connectivity for All Initiative

- Engaged in Connected DMV's Connectivity for All initiative to explore regional partnership and public-private collaboration to advance rapid closure of the digital divide
- Enabling more efficient and coordinated use of regional resources to support partnership development, programming, outreach, etc.
- Positioning our residents to take advantage of opportunities through the **Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) funding of \$3.2B** included in the 2020 Covid-19 Economic Relief Package
- EBB provides qualified households with discounted broadband services and connected devices through participating providers.



Next Steps

- Continue engaging in **Connected DMV's *Connectivity for All*** initiative
 - EBB training for the community is now archived online; next steps include focused community engagement in areas of lower broadband penetration.
 - Outreach and documentation in more languages in under development.
- Engaging existing/potential vendors to explore partnership opportunities such as Microsoft Digital Alliance or Comcast Lift Zones.
- Look at ways to co-locate digital equity functions which are currently supported by multiple agencies.
- Review and recommend opportunities to support residents when EBB federal funding expires.



Questions & Discussion