Examining Kansas City’s Progress in Addressing the Digital Divide: A Comparative Analysis

John B. Horrigan, PhD
@JohnBHorrigan
June 2020

Prepared on behalf of the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition and the Kansas City Public Library
Adoption Trends
American Community Survey
(% with broadband subscriptions at home)

United States
KCMO
KCK

2013: 73.4%
2014: 75.1%
2015: 76.7%
2016: 81.4%
2017: 83.5%
2018: 85.1%

2013: 69.6%
2014: 72.0%
2015: 74.9%
2016: 79.2%
2017: 82.3%
2018: 80.4%

2013: 60.4%
2014: 61.0%
2015: 67.2%
2016: 73.1%
2017: 74.8%
2018: 85.1%
Kansas City compared to other cities
(ACS 2018, home broadband adoption)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Home Broadband Adoption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austin</td>
<td>91.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>90.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento</td>
<td>90.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nashville</td>
<td>89.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>88.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas City, MO</td>
<td>85.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburgh</td>
<td>83.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cincinnati</td>
<td>82.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indianapolis</td>
<td>81.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas City, KS</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis</td>
<td>77.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adoption by income:
Kansas City vs United States (2017)
Looking at other metrics

• Wireline broadband adoption
• Computers in the household
• Why?
  – These are the tools necessary for using the internet for education and job search
• Wireless access alone (i.e., smartphone or hotspots) aren’t enough
How does KCMO stack up? (Wireline Broadband at Home)
How does KCMO stack up? (Computers at Home)
Kansas City’s “Homework Gap”

• About 1/3 of households with children under the age of 17 do not have wireline broadband.
  – That’s about 14,000 households
• About 1/4 KCMO households with children under the age of 17 do not have a computer.
  – That’s about 12,000 households
• For poorest households, 2/3 KCMO households do not have wireline broadband.
Interventions that move the dial

• Discount internet offerings for low-income households:
  – Research shows that places where ISPs offer low-income discounts have higher adoption rates than similar places without such offers.

• Digital skills training:
  – Low-income households who are recent broadband subscribers show much higher rates of using the internet for workforce development or lifelong learning than those without digital skills training.
Takeaways

• Community-driven partnerships are a mechanism to give life to programs to close adoption gaps
  ➢ Investments in digital skills training at community anchor institutions can increase adoption & accelerate network effects.

• Community partners can also help increase awareness of the availability of discount internet service plans