

The Lifeline program and Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) serve a vital role in providing low-income Americans with affordable access to essential communication services. NaLA's Annual Consumer Survey* received more than 68,000 responses and nearly 30,000 personal testimonies from Lifeline and/or former ACP participants who shared information about themselves and how they use phone and broadband service.

The ACP ran out of funding in May of 2024, but at its peak, the program connected more than 23 million households across the country. The Lifeline program is a small reprieve, as its \$9.25 monthly subsidy comes nowhere close to the \$30 per month offered by the ACP – an amount more consistent with market rates for entry-level mobile and fixed broadband plans.



Survey results show that **Lifeline benefits fall short** of addressing the growing broadband affordability gap, forcing respondents to **cut budgets in other areas** to maintain internet access.



Without the ACP, Americans have had to make tough budget decisions to stay connected to the internet.

40% reported making cuts to food spending to afford their monthly internet bills. Another 36% indicated they could not continue with telehealth with the ACP.



The end of the ACP resulted in adults having difficulty finding work and children struggling to complete homework.

About 20% of respondents report being unable to work remotely or pick up shift work, and nearly 20% report children having difficulty completing homework assignments.



Lifeline and ACP help those who really need it.

At least 80% of Lifeline/ACP subscribers live at or below the poverty line. Nearly one-third are homeless or live in temporary housing. Over half are older Americans. This includes Americans facing unemployment due to a disability (31%) and retirees with limited incomes (12%). Without ACP/Lifeline support, 72% would not be able to pay for internet service every month.



No co-pay plans are essential to keeping low-income Americans connected.

Nearly 95% of Lifeline and ACP subscribers say they cannot afford any additional payments toward their monthly service, and about half of all respondents are unbanked.



A majority of Americans are using broadband subsidies for essential services including healthcare, education, and access to government services.

70% of Americans use their ACP/Lifeline benefits for healthcare access, including doctor communications and telehealth. Over a third of subscribers utilize their ACP-supported devices for connecting with communities, remote work, job access and participating in online education.



78% of Lifeline/ACP subscribers lack access to a consistent form of internet or mobile data.

Without ACP/Lifeline benefits, 20% of consumers accessed the internet through a family member's devices, 27% used public libraries and Wi-Fi and over 31% had no internet access.



Mobile data is essential for low-income Americans.

85% of consumers rely on mobile wireless services to meet their household needs, yet fewer than 15% have access to unlimited data plans. Over 80% of consumers closely manage their data usage due to budget constraints.



Voice, text and data are all essential.

Nearly 75% of consumers surveyed value access to voice, text and data equally. Those who prioritized one service feature over another said voice service was the most important service feature (16%).

*Results collected between November 1 and 20, 2024